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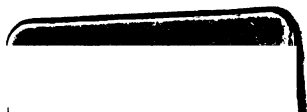
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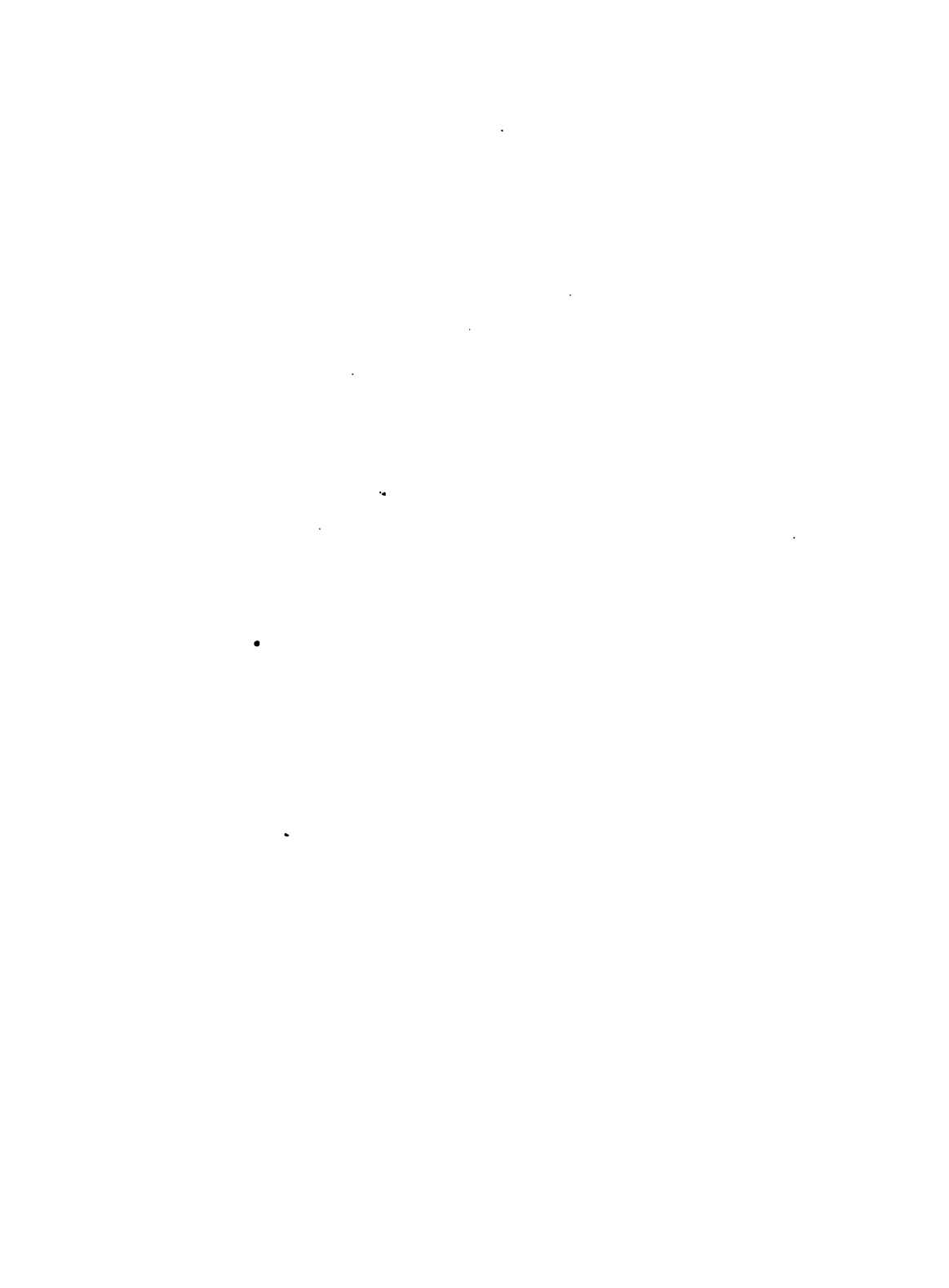
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CHEERFUL WORDS.

SERMONS,

SPECIALLY ADAPTED FOR DELIVERY BEFORE INMATES
OF LUNATIC ASYLUMS, UNIONS, WORKHOUSES,
HOSPITALS, GAOLS, PENITENTIARIES,
AND OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

EDITED BY WILLIAM HYSLOP,

*PROPRIETOR OF STRETTON HOUSE PRIVATE ASYLUM
FOR GENTLEMEN.*

CHURCH STRETTON, SHROPSHIRE.



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D E D I C A T E D

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TO

**THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY,
K.G.**

PREFACE.

For many years I have felt it to be my duty to prepare brief and simple discourses, which could be listened to and appreciated by patients suffering from very varied types of mental disease. I have found such services very beneficial, and I am borne out in my conviction of their utility by one of the most distinguished of contemporary psychologists, Harrington Tuke, Esq., F.R.C.P., the President of the Medico-Psychological Association. In a brilliant address delivered before the Association in August last, Mr. Tuke makes the following pertinent observations :—"Close bonds knit together the duties of the Divine and the general physician ; but in no branch of medicine, when admissible at all, is religious consolation more necessary than in the treatment of *mental depression* or *morbid fear*; no functions can be more closely united than whose which require us firmly, yet trustfully, to attempt to heal those that are broken in heart, to give medicine to heal their sickness."

With the view of meeting what I am convinced is a greatly felt want, I have made arrangements for the publication, from time to time, of a series of small volumes of

sermons, suitable for delivery before such audiences. In this work I have had the co-operation and able assistance of many eminent church dignitaries and clergymen ; and the present volume is the result. Each sermon can be read with ease in fifteen minutes. A *controversial* tone has been studiously avoided, and no sectarian doctrines have found a place in the work. The authors have judiciously refrained from using the language of *denunciation* ; the brighter and more loving aspects of CHRIST'S teaching being specially dwelt upon. I trust that the work will be found suitable, and, indeed, I feel confident that there are many discourses in the volume, which will amply repay careful perusal by all classes of society.

W. HYSLOP.

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CHRISTIAN TRIAL-BEARING.

I.

1 PETER iv. 12.—“*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*”

WHEN, as here, we find an Apostle giving Christians an advice, we may be very sure that he gives it to meet a real case, or, in other words, that the advice has reference to some existing condition of poor suffering humanity. Those ambassadors of Christ, who received their commission directly and immediately from Himself, had no desire to deal with imaginary ills, or to attempt the alleviation of merely fictitious sufferings. What they set themselves to do, in connection with the trial-bearing aspect of the Christian life, was to lead Christians to take a proper view of their trials, point out the true sources of comfort under them, and teach them to feel that they are only treading in the footsteps of the servants of God in



all ages, and especially in the footsteps of the Author of our faith, who Himself was perfected through suffering.

When, therefore, St. Peter tells us that we ought not to think trials strange, we may rely upon it, that it is his intention to counteract a tendency in us thus to view them ; and, my friends, is it not true that such a tendency exists ? Does not our individual experience bear ample testimony to the fact of its existence ? Are we not apt to think it strange that we should be made to suffer ? The man, on whom the sun of prosperity shines, and all whose paths drop fatness, does not think it strange, that, from day to day, he is blessed with life, and health, and unnumbered comforts and enjoyments—that he is defended from countless dangers—and that he is the recipient of varied, and multiplied mercies. He comes to look upon the ordinary blessings of Providence, as if he had a right to them. His daily bread—his nightly repose—the shelter and safety of his home—his social and intellectual enjoyments, these and such like, come to be regarded by him very much as if they were his due, and hence he does not think it strange that they are continued. But, let adversity set in—let disease and poverty, fell pair,

fall upon him—let him have sleepless nights and cheerless days—let disappointment, sorrow, and bereavement, follow each other in close succession, and he will account it strange, that a cup thus mingled, should be put into his hands, and feel as if God were measuring out to him something worse than he deserves. Ah ! how soon we begin to murmur and repine, when the dark shadow of adversity crosses our path ! how ready, for the most part, we are, to wince under the chastisement of our Heavenly Father ! how prone to think it strange that we should meet with thorns in our path, and that we should ever require to lie down elsewhere, than on a downy pillow and a bed of roses ! It is with us very much as it is with the beggar-man, who is accustomed to receive an alms at every door. So long as he continues to be thus treated, he does not think it at all strange ; but let him meet with a denial, where he was wont to be served, and he will think that strange. In that case, he will feel as if he were ill used, forgetting altogether, that he had no claim on any of the kindnesses he had formerly received. But, brethren, are not we all in the position of beggars, with reference to every bounty and blessing, which an all-gracious Providence bestows



upon us?—beggars too, who receive oftentimes without asking ; and show no gratitude for the gifts when received. So accustomed are we to be loaded with the benefits which God's compassion, and loving kindness bestow, that, whenever any of these are withheld, we feel as if some strange thing happened unto us—as if we were treated otherwise, and worse than we deserve.

In what I may further advance on the subject of trial-bearing, it shall be my object to specify and illustrate a few of the many reasons that might be adduced, to show why we should not look upon sufferings as strange ; and may what is said conduce, through the blessing of God, to our spiritual profiting.

The presence of sin in the world, is the first reason I would specify, why it should not be accounted strange, that we are subjected to suffering.

Suffering, my friends, is the natural consequence—the legitimate off-spring of sinning. God has linked the two together, in the relation of cause and effect, so that you may as well put your hand into the fire, and expect not to be burned, as think that you can sin and not

suffer. Such being the case, we have in this fact alone, a sufficient ground for expecting suffering to be a necessary part of our experience as sinners, instead of regarding it as something anomalous. If a man throws himself headlong over a precipice, we don't think it strange that he is dashed in pieces on the broken edges and sharp points of the rock. We don't think it in any way strange that one who has swallowed some deadly poison should soon thereafter die. No more, then, should we think it strange that one who has sinned should have to suffer. That it should be so follows, in accordance with a law more unalterable than that which holds in either of these cases. Why, then, should it be thought extraordinary, that we, who are amenable to this law, should experience the result of its operation—that we, who have drunk the poison of sin should have to endure the convulsive throes which are the natural result of its becoming incorporated with our system—that we should feel the pain of the sting of this serpent, which we have taken into our bosom, and fondly cherished as our daily delight?

But while we are bound to regard suffering as the consequence of sin, and, therefore, not to be

wondered at, we must be careful not to attribute every particular suffering or trial to some specific sin. Both extremes are alike dangerous. If, on the one hand, we isolate suffering from sin we make shipwreck on the pointed rocks of infidelity; and, on the other hand, if we seek to trace the immediate connection between the two, we run aground, ere we proceed far, on the sandbanks of an absurd credulity. The only way to avoid both this Scylla of infidelity and that Charybdis of fanaticism, is to acknowledge the connection, but, at the same time to confess inability to trace it in every individual instance. The man who denies that the trials and sufferings of the present life are the offspring of sin, calls God a liar to His face, while the other who thinks that he can demonstrate the paternity of every individual suffering presumptuously puts himself in God's place, and arrogantly lays claim to a knowledge of the secret working of Jehovah's hand. The tenor of our Lord's teaching on this subject is most instructive. The Jews of His time carried their doctrine of special judgments to such an extent that, on one occasion, He felt called on to expose its absurdity, which he did in a very marked way. Two events, of recent occurrence and well known

to those whom He addressed, furnished Him with the means of pointing out the utter unreasonableness of their views on the point. Some Galileans had gone up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple ; but for some reason or other, Pilate the governor of Judea, was incensed against them, and so determined was he on their death, that he violated the sanctity of the temple in order to accomplish it. He slew them in the very act of immolating the sacrificial animals and so mingled their blood with their sacrifices. The other occurrence took place at the town of Siloam, which fell and killed eighteen persons. With reference to both these cases, our Lord asked if they judged the more persons who thus met with their death were wicked than their neighbours around them. He told them expressly that it was not so, but that these things had happened to serve higher ends than the personal punishment of those who lost their lives in connection with them.

But while it is true that disasters of a singularly marked character may not be of the nature of special judgments, we yet know that such judgments have often been sent, and the reason for their being sent explicitly stated. The cities of the plain, Korah and his company, the men of

Bethshemish, and King Nebuchadnezzar, are instances regarding which the sacred volume speaks definitely, and in which the connection between the sin and its punishment is set forth with the utmost distinctness. There are times, too when, although we have not the sure word of prophecy to guide us, we can be in little doubt as to the reason of certain calamities being sent ; and in no case can we be at any loss to know what the lesson is they are designed to teach us. When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth it is that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness.

Though we cannot see the connecting link between sin and suffering, this should not lead us to look upon trials as a strange thing. These being under the direct and immediate control of God, they are not arbitrarily dispensed. It is convenient enough to speak of certain things, which produce no small degree of misery and suffering, as accidents ; although, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an accident. Every circumstance, whether it be the falling of a leaf, the overthrow of an empire, or the destruction of a world, is regulated in its minutest detail, by the great over-ruling Mind, whose will is law through-

out the vast extent of the universe. Whatever therefore, causes suffering or pain, is ordered by God, and is a part of the penalty of sin however distasteful such a doctrine may be to some so-called philosophical religionists. Being, as we all are, sinners we should not think it strange that we are likewise sufferers. What we ought to wonder at is that our life is not one continued scene of suffering from the cradle to the grave. Instead therefore of allowing ourselves to think, that we are treated otherwise and worse than we deserve, let us turn to the other side of the picture, and we shall discover many bright spots of sunshine, where we could have had no good reason to expect anything but darkness and gloom ; and as the instances of our Heavenly Father's graciousness rise up before us, let our hearts be filled with unfeigned gratitude, and our lives henceforth become one continued song of praise. Instead of bemoaning what we may be pleased to regard as the hardships of our lot, and yielding to a morbid despondency, let us rejoice that we are in the hands of a benignant and loving Father, who has no pleasure in the chastisement of children ; but who does all things wisely and well—who makes even afflictions and trials the ministers of His

mercy, and the dark clouds which oftentimes overshadow the path of our mortal pilgrimage the media of reflecting with brighter lustre His unspeakable love. What reason have we for blessing God, if He makes even our sufferings the means of leading us to regard sin as the bitter root whence they all spring—as that accursed thing which “brought death into, the world and all our woe,” and seek emancipation from its fatal tyranny! Once really convinced of sin’s exceeding sinfulness, and the dire consequences, which, unpardoned, it involves, we shall be in a position, in some measure, to appreciate the infinite love which provided an all-sufficient remedy for the evils which have flowed from transgression. Oh! that a sense of this love would touch all our hearts, destroy in us the power of evil, and send us, in the confidence of simple faith, to the refuge of the Gospel—the stronghold of Christian hope! Thus brought to Him, who is the great sin-offering, we shall enjoy His Shepherd-care, be led by Him through the green pastures of His grace, and by the still waters of His promises, until he bring us safely into that better land, where privation, suffering, and pain are unknown; but where all is joy, and peace, and love—where

there is nothing to hurt, or distress, or disturb in all God's holy mountain—a land over which the shadow of death shall never pass, but all whose inhabitants shall for ever flourish in immortal youth.

I shall leave the subject for the present, reserving my further remarks for a future occasion. May God accompany with His blessing, what has now been advanced, and to His name, in Christ, be all the praise.

CHRISTIAN TRIAL-BEARING.

II.

1 PETER iv. 12.—“ *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.*”

It is doubtless with the view of lightening his burden of trial, or helping him to bear up under it, that the Apostle urges the child of God not to account it strange that he should be subjected to such an ordeal. No doubt he is liable to be perplexed and discouraged when the deep shadows of distress encompass him on every side, and stands in need of such support as an enlightened faith and well-grounded Christian hope can afford him. But, blessed be God, the sources of comfort open to him are both abundant, and ready at hand. In his darkest and most trying hour, he is enabled, through faith, to realize the sympathizing

presence of the Man of Sorrows, and this upholds him mightily. He feels oftentimes as if he would sink under the load that oppresses him ; but the Invisible Sympathiser whispers in his ear, " Fear not, I will be with thee. The road may be rough and rugged, the sky overhead wear a threatening aspect, the valley dark and deep, but bear up bravely, for I will uphold and sustain thee." At no time is the child of God left so as that no comforting thoughts may be taken advantage of. Not only may he reflect that all the calamities, and sorrows of his lot are under the control of a loving Father, but also that they will be so overruled as to hasten his preparation for the kingdom of God. Rightly viewed they are seen to be blessings in disguise.

On a previous occasion, I referred to the presence of sin in the world, as one reason why Christians should not look upon trials as in any way strange, and now I go on to specify some other reasons : and may God dispose and enable us all to do and to bear His will.

The second reason I would give, is,—*Trials are a means of preparing us for heaven.*

Just as the precious metals are purified from the dross combined with them in the ore, by being

melted in a furnace, so our natures are purified from the dross of corruption, by passing through the furnace of affliction, and are thus fitted for the holy delights of the heavenly state. Afflictions and trials constitute a chief element in that discipline, by which we are trained for the fellowships of the redeemed. They are the means which God employs to remind us that we have not the conveniences, or the happiness of a home here, but that we are travelling through an enemy's country, where hardships and privations and many sudden and harrassing assaults are the very things to be expected. It is, through them, especially, that we are kept from fixing our affections on the fleeting and unsatisfying things of the present state. They are the hewing and squaring and polishing which we need as living stones, before we can be built in the temple of Jehovah, which is to adorn the Mount Zion of the heavenly Jerusalem. They are the pruning and dressing which, as trees of righteousness, are ready for being transplanted into that garden of the Lord, which is watered by the river of the water of life, issuing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. They are the chastisements of our Heavenly Father, by

which He seeks to destroy the waywardness of our dispositions, and train us to be affectionate inmates of a heavenly home. Why, then, should we grudge to submit to them, when they are the appointed means of leading to such glorious results? The artisan submits to the drudgery and inconvenience of his apprenticeship, because he knows that this is the only way in which he can become a proficient in the business or handicraft, to which he purposes to devote himself. It would, perhaps, be more agreeable to spend his time in frivolous amusements and idle pastimes; but he knows that these could never enable him to make his way in the world, and, therefore, with a willing mind he goes through the unrewarded toils of the period over which his apprenticeship extends. The student again sits patiently over his midnight lamp, devotes himself with unremitting study to the literary or scientific pursuits which engage his attention, and struggles hard to master every difficulty that comes in his way, in order that he may be fully equipped for the work of his after life. It might, perhaps, afford him more immediate pleasure to mingle in scenes of gaiety, and social intercourse, than to plod on as he does with his studies, but he knows that there is no

royal road to learning, and, therefore, he struggles on over the rugged, and, it may be, oftentimes, forbidding path. Why, then, should not the Christian submit, with a willing mind, to that discipline of trial, by which he is prepared for dwelling in the mansions of eternal glory? Why should he not learn to look upon afflictions as evidences of his Father's love? This is the view which St. Paul would have us take of the matter. "My son," says he, "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him, for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" But to be able to look upon trials in this light—to esteem them blessings in disguise—messengers of God's mercy, is an evidence that we are partakers of that grace, which hath appeared unto all men, bringing salvation. If we can do this we can say with the poet—

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

But what will enable us so to look upon affliction? No affliction is in itself any thing

but grievous ; how, then, is the Christian brought to look upon it as a proof of love ? The answer is,—He can only thus regard it, through the grace of God operating on his heart. In the middle ages, when the torch of science gave but a dim and flickering light; philosophers puzzled themselves and laboured hard to discover some substance whose touch would transmute the baser metals into precious. The literal philosopher's stone, it is true, was never discovered ; but science has revealed many ways of transforming what was base and worthless into what is valuable and excellent. Science, therefore, holds in her hand a metaphorical philosopher's stone, which may be taken as an emblem of that power, revealed in the Gospel, by whose agency the trials and afflictions of the present time are transmuted into the choicest blessings, intended and calculated to produce the greatest good. The grace of God, operating on the sinner's heart, produces far more wonderful changes than those anticipations from the touch of the philosopher's stone. It finds the human soul a vessel fitted for destruction, and, through a process of discipline, in which trials and sufferings occupy a prominent place, it transmutes it into

a bright jewel, to be set in the Redeemer's crown. If, then, the grace of God employs trials for such a purpose as this, we ought surely not to regard them as strange, but to welcome them as the pioneers of eternal peace and happiness. Besides, we are not left destitute of comfort when we are passing through this fiery furnace. When the three Hebrew children were cast into the furnace of Babylon, One like the Son of God was seen walking with them in the midst of the fire. So is it with us. In our darkest afflictions, and our severest trials, the Son of God accompanies us, and defends us from any real injury. The promise is, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." Just as on the dark and threatening cloud you see the painted pledge of God's promise, (and the darker the cloud the brighter the bow,) so on the dark cloud of affliction the believer sees the bright reflection of God's love; for it is invariably fringed with the soft colouring of His mercy. In the fiery trials through which he passes, the Christian is enabled to read, as if

written in letters of fire, his title to the kingdom of heaven, and the crown of glory; and hence a strong reason for glorying even in tribulations, as being fraught with rich blessings.

3. A third reason why we should not think trials strange is,—*That all who have gone before us into heaven, have passed through this ordeal.* —“Who are these who are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?” “These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Yes, brethren, all the saints of God have suffered affliction, from righteous Abel down to those who are at this moment undergoing the fiery trial. The wicked are those who are most frequently exempt from suffering. “I have seen the wicked,” says the Psalmist, “in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree.” But mark the sequel; “Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not, yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.” He has all his good things in this world, so that when he goes hence, he has to leave his greatness, his luxuries, and his pleasures behind him, and go into the great eternity, unfriended, unpardoned, unpurified. Not so with the child of God. for

after his pilgrimage of trial, and his fight of faith, his discipline of patient endurance, and his rejoicing in hope, he is admitted to the joys which are at God's right hand, and the pleasures which are for evermore.

Think, my friends, of what some of those who may be called the high priests of the upper sanctuary, had to pass through in the time of their probation. Think of Job, who, in one day, was stripped of his worldly possessions and bereft of his children,—of Moses, whose life-story shows that he was compassed with many trials, of which the greatest, perhaps, was the ingratitude of the very people, to deliver whom he had forfeited a crown: “he chose rather,” we are told, “to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,”—of the man after God's own heart, who had trials sore and deep, though he was surrounded by the splendours of Israel's throne: he had grief in his government, grief in his family, and the deep anguish of his heart speaks out in the sacred melodies which we have from his pen,—and of the prince of the apostles, who himself tells us what some of his trials were; and the catalogue is sufficiently appalling. These all endured a

great fight of affliction, but are now beyond the reach of suffering and woe, in the realms of light. But time would fail me to tell of others whose trials and griefs are written in the sacred page, all of whom have passed that bourne from which no traveller returns, and in the dwelling-place of the ransomed are praising the God of their common salvation. How, then, should we think it strange if we are made to follow in their footsteps, as we pursue our heavenward journey ?

4. Finally :—Our trials should not seem strange when we think that *our blessed Lord Himself passed through suffering.*

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. From His cradle to His cross, it was with Him one continued scene of privation and suffering, insult and ignominy, heartless ingratitude and base misrepresentation. “He was,” as the Apostle informs us, “perfected through suffering ;” which can only mean, that by this means He was perfected for being our Saviour. And although we cannot tell in what respects the sufferings He endured on earth fitted Him for fulfilling the duties of that high office which He voluntarily undertook, we know one qualification at least which He thus received, namely,

an ability to sympathise with us. In Him we have an High Priest over the house of Israel, who Himself passed through the valley of suffering, and thus knows how to succour those who are undergoing this fiery trial of their faith. Not only did Christ suffer, but He suffered without having sinned. It was "for our transgressions that He was bruised ; and it was the chastisement of our peace that was laid upon Him." Surely, then, if the pure and holy Jesus required to suffer, in order to expiate the world's guilt, we should not think it strange if we, who are personally guilty, have to suffer likewise. If the great Master was thus treated on earth, is it strange that the servants should experience like treatment ? In this, as in other respects, the servant is not greater than his Lord. Our Lord taught His disciples to expect this. He told them that if the world hated Him, it would also hate them. "If any man will come after Me," said He, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Yes, Divine Redeemer, Thy followers, like Thyself, have found this world to be an inhospitable clime ; but this is their great

consolation, that they are only following the paths which Thou hast trodden before them, and in the darkest hours, when they are assailed by the fiercest storms, they can hear Thy voice of love saying to their worst enemies, as Thou saidst of old to the stormy elements, "Peace, be still." When, therefore, we call to mind the afflictions Thou hadst to endure—the agony of Gethsemane, the insults of the judgment-hall, and the anguish which wrung Thy blessed soul on Calvary, we cannot surely think it strange that we have trials to endure and sufferings to encounter in this disciplinary state. "Let us," therefore, consider "Thee who didst endure such contradiction of sinners against Thyself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds."

Tried, brethren, in one way or other, we all are, but let us ever bear in mind, that no trial is sent which is not needed to wean us from the world, by convincing us of the utter instability of all created joys,—not needed to purge us from the dross of corruption,—not needed to prepare us for the hallowed employments of the heavenly state, and this will go far to reconcile us even to the most painful discipline. Besides, have we not many precious promises to cheer us as we press

on over, what may often prove, a thorny and difficult path? Especially, have we not the promise of a joyous reception when we arrive at our Father's house, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God? Surveying, from the heights of heaven, the way by which we have been led, we shall not feel that we have been too much tried, but shall see abundant reason for praising God on account of the very trials by which He sanctified us for His presence. Recognising our loving Father's hand in connection with all the griefs, disappointments, and sorrows which fall to our lot, let us kiss the rod, and with the meekness of a genuine submission, leave ourselves in His hands, knowing that He will make crooked things straight before us, and rough places plain. It is, brethren, after all, but for a short time that we shall be thus tried. In a few short years at the most we shall be beyond the reach of suffering and woe.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
 With a heart for any fate,
 Still achieving, still pursuing,
 Learn to labour and to wait.

May God add His blessing, and so render what has been said both animating and comforting. Amen.

SERMON III.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN
GOD.

"I shall not want."—PSALM xxiii. 1.

THE twenty-third Psalm, my friends, is one of those Hebrew melodies, the touching simplicity and beauty of whose imagery all must admit. It is associated in the case of many with childhood's happy days, when the innocent loveliness of the young heart was untarnished by the debasing influences of worldliness and sin ; and when the horizon of life was cloudless, bright, and beautiful. Nor is it only with the sunshine of life's early morning that this Psalm is associated, its simple pathos is equally well suited for him around whom the shadows of evening are closing. Many a time have the comforting thoughts which



it suggests cheered the heart of the weary pilgrim on life's highway, when his head was whitened with the snows of three-score and ten winters. The feeling of confidence which this sacred song inspires, throws a gleam of sunshine on the darkest cloud, and goes far to reconcile the heavenward traveller to the thorny path which he is required to tread, as he journeys on through an inhospitable clime to the mansions on high.

Under a variety of beautiful and impressive images, the Psalmist here celebrates the shepherd-care and the shepherd-faithfulness of Jehovah, his God, and gives expression to the confidence which a sense of these inspires. When God is called our Shepherd, we feel that He is brought, so to speak, nearer to our human sympathies, than when any of the more majestic epithets are applied to Him. This name brings to the godly a confidence, a consolation, a security somewhat akin to that inspired by the word *Father*.

It is when he thinks of God in this pleasing (might I not say homely ?) character, that the Psalmist is inspired with the confidence to which he gives expression in the words, *I shall not*

want, or, according to Luther's rendering, *I shall want for nothing*.

In these words our attention is directed to that inward peace which they experience who are devoutly submissive to the will of God, a peace which is in a great measure undisturbed by the ripple of external circumstances.

Instead of dwelling on the nature and advantages of this delightful repose, I shall only refer to the grounds of it, as these appear to be what the Psalmist has chiefly in his mind. While endeavouring to indicate and estimate some of these grounds of confidence in God, may the influences of the Divine Spirit descend upon our souls, and give us to experience that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

But before proceeding to specify the particular grounds of David's confidence, which, in the main, are identical with those on which we should rest, it will be well to have a clear understanding of the import of the expression, *I shall not want*.

Obviously, this expression does not mean that those who put their trust in God shall obtain all they wish, or strive for, or expect, in the present world. There are innumerable things

which the people of God greatly desire, but which they never obtain—countless wishes of theirs which are never realised—aye, and much that they would do everything in their power to avert, which they have yet to submit to. Never, for instance, would they desire calamities or afflictions to come upon them, and yet these are frequently the portion of their cup.

Nor, again, does the expression mean, that the people of God shall never be tried with the sore pinchings of poverty, and thus see want staring them in the face. Poor and oppressed and destitute they often are, yea, and reduced to the very last straits, before God interposes for their deliverance. It was so in the case of Job and Elijah, of Hagar in the wilderness, and the beggar Lazarus at the rich man's gate. It is apparent, therefore, that God's shepherd-care does not preclude poverty and want from falling to the lot of His people.

Nor, again, can we regard the expression, "*I shall not want*," as implying that the children of God shall not experience the want of human help and human sympathy, while fighting the battle of life. The merest glance at the history of the church and people of God will suffice to dispel

any delusion of this kind. As you look back over the way by which the church of God has been led, you will see that oftentimes the powers of the world have been leagued against it, and that it has sometimes been reduced to a small despised remnant. Yet, true it is, that God makes the most adverse circumstances, as well as the most prosperous events, conducive to the true good of them that trust and fear Him. Therefore it is that his heart, who truly feels that all that is sent him is overruled for his real good, tells him the true meaning of the expression, "I shall want for nothing." He is indeed convinced that nothing God knows to be really for his good will He withhold. Happy, thrice happy, the man who thus puts his trust in God, for he doubtless has learned in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content.

1. The first and most comprehensive ground of the Psalmist's confidence is, the relation in which he regards God as standing to him. "The Lord is my Shepherd," he says, and

then immediately adds, as if nothing more were necessary, "I shall not want." As being my Shepherd, it is simply impossible that He can allow me to be without anything that is really good for me. His Shepherd-faithfulness, as it were, compels Him to supply all my need. And, brethren, can there be any doubt, that there is in this relation the surest conceivable guarantee that provision, sufficiently ample provision, will be made both for the temporal and spiritual wants of God's people? The faithful shepherd spares no trouble, and grudges no labour, in order to make the best possible provision for the safety and nourishment of the whole flock committed to his care. In doing this, according to the best of his judgment, he has often to thwart their wishes, and act towards them contrary to their strongly manifested inclination. He feels it to be his duty, for instance, when the wintry blast is blowing cold and keen, and the snow drifting with a bewildering fury, to keep his flock on the windy side of the mountain, in spite of their strong inclination to lurk in sheltered

positions ; but where, if they were allowed to remain, they would soon be buried under the wreath.

The most faithful shepherd, however, is but a very imperfect type of what God, as our Shepherd, is ; for such an one has but limited knowledge and still more limited power. But God is subject to no such limitations. Besides, He would belie His very nature, were He not to be faithful, and employ His unlimited resources for the good of those who are the sheep of His pasture. Thus we see that, in the very nature of things, if God is a Shepherd, His sheep cannot be but amply provided for, their wants fully supplied, and their safety permanently secured.

But without having learned something of the graciousness of His nature, we cannot be convinced that He has a shepherd-care over us ; and this we cannot learn from the study of His character as a Being of infinite might and majesty, of spotless holiness and unerring wisdom. Thus viewed, we would find nothing in Him to tell us that He is graciously disposed to sinners. But when we behold Him in the face of Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son, He is seen to be gracious, compassionate, merciful—seeking to reconcile the

world to Himself—declaring His willingness not to impute their trespasses unto men—proclaiming Himself to be the Lord God, merciful and gracious, not desiring the death of the sinner, but his salvation and eternal life. It is in Him, therefore, that we recognise God as our Shepherd. In Christ He speaks to us, not in the whirlwind, nor in the tempest, nor in the earthquake, but in the soft, sweet accents of love—in the still small voice, which says, “Come unto Me, and I will have mercy upon you, your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

Further, we must not only see God in Christ as a pre-requisite to our recognising Him as our Shepherd; we must also feel that He who speaks to us thus graciously is *our* God. It will not suffice that we acknowledge God’s graciousness with respect to others—Christ’s immediate disciples, for instance, or those who have had striking experiences of His grace, such as the thief on the cross, Saul on his way to Damascus, or the jailor in the midnight cell at Phillippi.

We must come nearer home, and feel that He is graciously disposed towards us. Yes, brethren, you and I must experience as our own that grace which has come to guilty man through Him who was one with the Father, though He dwelt in human shape. The Psalmist, you will observe, brings the matter home to himself, by, as it were, appropriating God's Shepherd-care. He is not satisfied with speaking of God, like Jacob on his death-bed, as the Shepherd of Israel, or like the Apostle Peter, as the Shepherd and Bishop of souls; but he says, (and says it too, appreciating its blessedness,) "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." I feel that His salvation has come to *me*—that the day-spring from on high has visited *me*, and the day-star arisen in *my* heart. Now, brethren, if we would have true heart-confidence and gladness, we must feel somewhat as David felt. We must see with the eye of faith God's favour and mercy reaching unto us—we must, so to speak, feel His hand plucking us as brands from the burning—we must personally experience the favour He bears to His chosen, as a condition of enjoying that peace which passeth all understanding. As soon as I feel myself to be under the influence and opera-

tion of Divine grace, then I can rest, then I can say, "Abba, Father," then I know I am safe. Let me be where I may, and exposed to every possible kind of danger, yet will I fear no evil. I shall want for nothing, since the Omnipotent God is my Shepherd—to protect me, to provide for me.

2. A second ground of David's confidence was—a *consciousness of God's presence with him.*

This he expresses in one of the subsequent verses of the Psalm, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." It is passing strange that the belief (if belief it be,) that God is everywhere present should have so little effect upon us. The inherent ungodliness of the unrenewed heart leads to a habitual forgetfulness of God's presence. But the view the renewed man has obtained of his responsibility invests the doctrine of the Divine omnipresence with an unspeakable importance. It is indeed one of the most satisfactory evidences of the new creation, if a man moves about through the scenes and occupations of every-day life with the thought, "Thou God seest me," habitually in his mind. This living consciousness of the Divine presence gives him a victory over temptations when they assail him, and drives away despondency when the ills of life threaten to

overwhelm him. O what a comfort, what a delight for the believer to think that his God is ever at his side—a very present help! This is the staff on which the weary pilgrim ever leans, and which never fails to give him support. At what time soever he is in trouble, and clouds and darkness are around his path, nothing so completely tranquillises him as God whispering in his ear, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee.” It was because he knew the comfort His presence would give, that with His last words our Lord promised to be with His disciples alway, even unto the end of the world. “I have set the Lord always before me,” says David, “because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”

3. A third ground of David's confidence is—*what God had already done for him.*

He looked back over the way by which God had led him, and the survey gave him confidence. Hitherto God had helped him, and he took that as a pledge that He would help him still. When, too, he thought of the variety and

abundance of his present blessings—blessings he describes by most impressive imagery, “Thou preparest a table before me, Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over,” the inference he drew was, “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” But all present mercies are not pledges—earnests of future ones. The world indeed is full of mercies, but it is not to these that the Psalmist refers. The mercies of which he speaks are such as the world neither possesses, nor knows of—mercies such as the pardon of sin, and a constant communion with the unseen God. These are the sources of heavenly pleasure, the foretastes of unmingled joy. These are the unequivocal declarations given by God, that He will bestow all needed grace here, and bring to the enjoyment of unspeakable glory hereafter.

Are you, brethren, conscious of the possession of these mercies? If, like David, you have experience of the shepherd-care of God—if you feel that it is because He is with you, that the trials and tribulations of the world do not entirely crush you—if you find that spiritual blessings greatly abound towards you—that in this world of sin and imperfection you enjoy much of God’s favour

—that He is indeed anointing your head with oil, and making your cup run over, then like David also you may exclaim, “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” Yes, and you may look beyond this life, and say, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Like the water which gushed from the smitten rock and followed the Israelites in all their wanderings through the wilderness, shall the goodness and mercy of God, coming from the smitten rock Christ, follow you through all the stages of your earthly pilgrimage, until, crossing the Jordan of death, you arrive in the heavenly Canaan—a land not flowing with milk and honey, but watered by the river of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. If you will but take refuge under the shadow of God’s wings, you will find that His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear Him—that He never leaves nor forsakes them that trust in Him—that the sheep of His flock shall never want any good thing, “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

SERMON IV.

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

I.

REVELATION xv. 3.—“*And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*”

ACCORDING to the representation of the evangelical prophet, the ransomed of the Lord shall come to the heavenly Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads ; and the entranced apostle tells us, in the text, what these songs are to be. Those who are hereafter to sing them must learn to lisp them in the house of their pilgrimage. They must catch up their spirit while they sojourn in the stranger-land of the world, far away from the blessed and peaceful mansions where the saints dwell in unmingled joys.

We, brethren, profess to be travelling to that heavenly home—to be seeking a city which hath

foundations, and, if such be our true character, it is most fit that we should familiarize ourselves, as much as possible, with the delightful employments which are to occupy the redeemed throughout eternity. The true idea of preparation for heaven is to acquire a relish for whatever is in harmony with its hallowed occupations, and learn to estimate in the light of eternity mere earthly delights. But in treating of the employments of the heavenly world, with a view to stimulating a taste for what anticipation of them are possible here, we must restrain imagination and rest contented with what God has been pleased to reveal. There is no way in which it is easier to gratify the great majority of religiously disposed persons than by speculating about the heavenly state, and giving full play to fancy in describing the conditions of life, the kind of society, and the nature of the intercourse, which prevail there. But that is not the way in which men are made wiser and better. It is not thus that the habits and dispositions suitable for the holy fellowships on high are engendered. It is not fanciful but scriptural views of the state of bliss, that are calculated to forward our preparation for being admitted into the mansions on

high. Let us not seek then to be wise above what is written, but endeavour to profit by a right understanding and application of the ingrafted word.

After these preliminary remarks, let me turn to the more immediate consideration of the text.

The fight of faith is finished, and the victory won,—the Jordan of death is crossed,—the wilderness, with its privations, unsettledness, and sorrows, is left behind ; and the multitudes of the redeemed have reached the better land of Immanuel, where the river flows, and the tree of life flourishes. The inhabitants of this blessed country are represented, in the passage from which the text is taken, as finding all peace and joy in singing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses, which is preserved, celebrates the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage ; the song of the Lamb celebrates another deliverance of which that was but a faint type. The subjects which form the burden of both these songs, are to some extent within our comprehension, even in this imperfect state ; and there is nothing better calculated to excite in us feelings of adoring gratitude, than a devout

study of the hand-writing which God has inscribed over the pathway of His providence and the opened treasures of His grace. The more our minds are filled with these exhaustless themes, the more will our hearts beat in unison with the sentiments of love which pervade the multitude of the redeemed around the throne of God.

I purpose to take up, in connection with the text, the two subjects which it suggests, namely, God's way in Providence, and His work of grace ; and may the Divine Spirit be our Instructor, and make us feel the pulsations of heavenly love, as we learn to lisp the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.

I. *The contemplation of God's way in Providence affords a most appropriate subject for deep—everlasting praise.*

It was a special deliverance of himself and his countrymen, that Moses celebrated in the song which was raised by the hosts of Israel on the shores of the Red Sea. God had just interposed, in a most marvellous way, to rescue His people. He had opened up for them a way through the sea, and buried their pursuers in the

depths when they attempted to make use of the same passage. Well, then, might the heart of the Hebrew leader and the recently emancipated thousands of Israel, exult with joy, when they thought how Jehovah had made bare His holy arm, to rescue them from what appeared to be, either immediate destruction, or a more galling yoke than they had hitherto borne. Well might they sing, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

But the special deliverance, which was the immediate theme of the song of Moses, was merely an outstanding example of what God is continually doing when He makes all things work together for the good of His chosen. It was merely a more striking because a more palpable display of the manner in which that resistless hand which regulates every event, mighty as well as minute, throughout the whole universe, gives certain effect to every purpose of the Most High. It was only a marked illustration of what every child of God experiences, viz. ; that He is a very present help in the time of trouble—that He often, in a most unexpected way, rends asunder the dark cloud, and makes

his path plain before Him. Who has not had such experiences of God's ways in his own personal history? What true Christian can review the history of his own life without perceiving that God has been the breaker-up of his way—that He has removed the obstacles that threatened to obstruct him, and has come to him with an unlooked for deliverance in the hour of his extremity? Now, if it be so while the saint is yet in the midst of the conflict, can we doubt that when all his trials are ended, and the victory fully won, looking back through the unclouded atmosphere of heaven over the way by which he has come, he will see abundant cause for grateful praise, and feel that through all his wanderings in this weary wilderness, an unseen, but Almighty hand has guided and defended him—that the counsels of unerring wisdom have presided over his destiny, and that the gracious protection of a heavenly Father has at all times been vouchsafed to him? Viewing the past in this light, the ransomed of the Lord will, doubtless, make God's goodness experienced by them a subject of adoration, and, throughout the ages of eternity celebrate, in celestial song, that marvellous superintendence which alike watches over the falling of

a sparrow and all the mighty movements of the universe. It cannot be supposed that we shall ever cease to have a living interest in all that God has done for us in the house of our pilgrimage, when we shall have laid aside the garments of mortality, and become dwellers in that city on high, which hath golden paved streets, gates of pearl, and walls of jasper? The remembrance of what they themselves have experienced, will lead the thoughts of the redeemed to the general contemplation of Jehovah's incomprehensible doings. Hence they are represented as saying, in the words immediately succeeding the text, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints!" What a field, brethren, does this open up for our contemplation! It is, however, but a small portion of it that we can explore in our present imperfect state. Our capacity for comprehending the mysteries with which the Divine Worker everywhere surrounds Himself, is very limited indeed; but even limited as it is, it enables us to discover innumerable evidences of wisdom unerring, and goodness universally diffused. If, even now, we are filled with admiration when we view God's works

through the darkened glass of our present imperfections, what must our feelings be when the clouds are cleared away, and the sphere of our vision inconceivably enlarged ! If the revelation made to us when we can only, as it were, stammer over a single page of the record of God's working be such as might afford materials for an archangel's praise, what must it be when we are able to read the book of eternity with fluency and understanding ? How transcendent and overpowering must their estimate of the Divine perfections be who stand in the presence of the unveiled Majesty of heaven, and see the wonders of the universe unrolled before them ! Though we are not competent to enter fully into the feelings which the contemplation of the works of God excites in the bosom of the citizen of heaven, we may and ought to cultivate kindred emotions — we may join in the strains of the angelic song, though in a lower measure. If we learn to see God's benevolence to us reflected in the ordinary procession of events, in the sunshine and starlight and showers which characterise the common course of time, as well as in the extraordinary phenomena which sometimes surprise or alarm us, we shall realise the truth, that everything within

us and around us proclaims an ever-present and ever-gracious God,—that His care over us is unceasing, and extends to the minutest incident,—in short, “That in Him we live and move and have our being.” The more clearly and practically we realise this truth, the more thoroughly will our hearts harmonise with the strains of the song of Moses. If we could but feel that all the arrangements of the material world, complicated as they are, and mysteriously linked together, have been planned and are brought into operation expressly to promote the comfort and welfare of man, who stands at the head of God’s creation on earth, our hearts would assuredly overflow with gratitude, and our mouths be filled with praise. If we could see that yonder sun was placed in the heavens to give light, and life, and beauty to the earth, our dwelling-place—if we could see that the alternation of day and night, and the succession of the seasons—that the products of the earth and the treasures of the deep—that myriad tribes of living animals, and the fossilised remains of extinct races—that the sparkling diamond in its dark hiding-place, and the brilliant pearl in the ocean depths—that the mountain, vomiting forth

smoke and flame and liquid fire—the earthquake shaking the very framework of nature, and the tempest sweeping with devastating fury over sea and land—if, I say, we could see that all these are intended for our good, would not our lives become a ceaseless song of praise—a daily oblation of grateful and loving obedience, the spontaneous outflow of confiding hearts? We need nothing more than a true recognition of the manifold goodness which is showered so profusely around our path, to awaken in us sentiments of the most profound gratitude. This recognition is all we need to teach us the song of Moses, in the elementary school in which we are now in the course of being trained for the nobler exercises and loftier strains of the temple-service on high. Let us strive, therefore, to incorporate this thought with our very existence, the thought, namely, that God is everywhere and in everything, and that wherever He is, He is the same beneficent Being, bringing good out of all, to them that love Him with true hearts, serve Him with willing minds, and confide in Him with faith unfeigned.

I trust, brethren, there are many of you, who, on reviewing the past, and reflecting on the way

in which God has led you, and the blessings He has bestowed upon you, are filled with a fervent gratitude ; and are ready, even now, to join in the song that is sung in heaven, the burden of which is, God's marvellous goodness to His people, and His ever-gracious care over them. And if you can already join in this song, with what intensified rapture will you take up its strains when you find yourselves in the number of those who sing it before the throne ? When Moses sang this song on the shores of the Red Sea, the wilderness with all its hardships and privations and provocations was still before him. Now, your condition, my friends, is, in some respects, similar to his. The wilderness of this world is still before you, but if you put your confidence in Him who has brought you up thus far, He will neither leave nor forsake you, until He bring you triumphantly through the Jordan of death into the promised land of rest. If, in the heat of the battle, and while there are enemies yet unconquered, you can put your trust in the great Captain of your salvation, and rejoice in His name, what must your delight be when you at last join in the shouts of victory ? If, in your present position on the further shore of the Red

Sea of trial, you can celebrate the praises of your Deliverer, when you think of the dangers from which He has rescued you, how much greater reason will you have to do this, when you stand secure on the shores of the eternal world, and see sin and satan and death plunged into the dark depths of the burning abyss? Oh, the blessedness of reaching that tranquil haven, where the tempest rages no more. Oh, to stand on that blissful shore where all is peace and joy—where our departed friends, who have gone before us, are waiting to welcome us—where the Star of Bethlehem, which was our guide on earth, shines for ever above the mansion, where the Saviour dwells! Sorrow and sadness are there unknown, and the remembrance of the great tribulation out of which we have come, will only serve to heighten our rapture, in singing the song of Moses, the servant of God.

I shall reserve for another occasion what I have to say on the second part of the subject, namely, the song of the Lamb. May God accompany what has now been said with His blessing, and to His name in Christ be all the praise. Amen.

SERMON V.

THE SONG OF THE REDEEMED.

II.

*"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God,
and the song of the Lamb."*—REVELATION xv. 3.

IN what I formerly advanced in connection with these words, I restricted my remarks to the song of Moses, and spoke of the subject which it celebrates, as affording ground for songs of praise by the redeemed, when they shall have become dwellers in the New Jerusalem and worshippers in the heavenly temple. I shall now, therefore, proceed, as then proposed, to direct your attention to the consideration of the second part of the subject; beseeching God to grant unto us the illumination of His Holy Spirit.

II. The song of the Lamb, conjoined with that of Moses, makes up the anthem of the redeemed, according to the representation of the text. The reason why Moses and Christ are associated together in this connection, is sufficiently obvious. The one fitly represents the preparatory dispensation, while the other as fitly represents the full and final economy. Together, therefore, they represent the whole course of God's gracious dealings with mankind. We must apprehend the whole subject if we suppose that the two dispensations are not most intimately related. The true view is, that they are parts of one whole—that the one only foreshadowed the other—that the types and ceremonies and sacrifices, instituted by Moses, all pointed to Christ, and derived their significance from His self-denying life and meritorious death. In this way it appears that the song of the Lamb is just the song of Moses set to a higher key. It is just a higher step of the one ladder, by which the sinner is enabled to ascend to the footsteps of Jehovah's throne, and receive the blessings of salvation and eternal life. If the manifestation which God, in the scheme of redemption, has given us of His unfathomable mercy, does not make our hearts glow with the warmest

emotions, it may well be questioned, whether we have a right appreciation of what the works of nature and the events of providence teach us concerning God, and the marvellous way in which He provides for His people. The man of science, and the philosophical observer of passing events, may find food enough for admiration, as they pursue their respective studies. The wisdom and adaptation and beneficence, apparent everywhere, may call forth their warmest praise. But all the while they may fail to recognise the personal presence of the Presiding Mind, whose only object is to communicate happiness. Those who can study nature without seeing, as in a mirror, the reflection of nature's God, are destitute of that power of perception, which alone can recognise and appreciate the mysteries of redeeming love—are strangers to those sentiments of divine love, which the self-witnessing revelation of Christ to the soul, never fails to inspire. We may know the song of the Lamb theoretically, but we can never sing it, unless our hearts are beating with the pulsations of heavenly love—unless they are touched as with a live coal from off God's altar. We may be intellectually familiar with the whole scheme of grace unfolded in the

Gospel, and be able to give a scriptural account of its various provisions and relations ; but this is not enough to qualify us for singing the song of the Lamb. We must be personally partakers of the blood-bought blessings of salvation, before we can join in that song, or before it can become the utterance of our heartfelt emotions. A blind man may know the theory of vision, and have a clear understanding of how the image is painted on the retina, so as to affect the optic nerve and convey the impression to the mind ; but his eyes must be opened before he can experience the pleasure which the sense of sight ministers. In the same way the joy of which the song of the Lamb is the expression, can only be felt by such as have been enlightened by the Spirit of God—such as have passed from the death of sin into the life of holiness.

The song of the Lamb celebrates the whole of the Redeemer's work, and hence the impossibility of exhausting the theme. There are continually new aspects of this work, unfolding themselves to the eye of faith. The more we think of the incomprehensible love and mercy which it displays, the more vividly are we

impressed with the idea of its vastness. The more we know of the love of Christ,—and the more we feel its power, the more convinced are we that it passeth understanding. Nor is there any reason to suppose that it will be otherwise, in this respect, when the mists of time are cleared away and the brightness of eternal day shines upon the inhabitants of heaven. Without weariness or satiety they, we may believe, will unceasingly pursue the same theme, with their knowledge ever increasing, but never becoming final. Thus the redeemed in heaven will continue for ever to sing the song of the Lamb, but with an endlessly increasing expression. We must not, however, lose sight of the fact, that, if we would sing it hereafter, we must begin to learn it here. But : the subject of this song is such as should have the strongest charm for us even now. In the works of creation and providence we meet with much to exalt our conceptions of God, as great, and wise, and good ; but there is nothing in the kind of knowledge which we thus obtain strange or such as might not have been anticipated ; but in the work of grace, to accomplish which God sent His own Son to die for a

guilty world, there is that which we never could have anticipated—a view of the Divine character altogether new, and transcendently more glorious than what we elsewhere witness or could have conceived. There is a kind and measure of graciousness here which we never could have thought of. There is here a species and intensity of love, such as we at once acknowledge to the incapacity of our hearts to estimate, and their coldness to feel. We have indeed no analogy, within the circle of our knowledge, to the unspeakable gift which God has bestowed upon us. The very idea of a gift so inestimably precious, could have its origin only in that infinite love which would • bear to bestow it. Of all the events that have taken place in the annals of eternity, we can conceive none worthy to be compared with this, that He who made the world died for it—that He! who was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled Himself and died on a cross for the salvation of a guilty, rebel race. Yes, my friends, every other subject sinks into insignificance when placed side by side with this. The cross of Christ is a point so luminous and radiant, that it sends forth a

glory to all the nations of the earth—all the corners of the universe—all the generations of time, and all the ages of eternity. This is an object which attracts heaven, earth, and hell. There is in it a depth of mystery which the angels cannot fathom—a greatness of love which they cannot measure. It is the stay, and hope, and rejoicing of men, the wonder of angels, and the dread of devils. It is an expression of love which will be heard in the remotest eternity, and can never fail to make the hearts of the redeemed overflow with the warmest gratitude, and fill their mouths with the loftiest praise.

In every aspect in which it can be viewed, the mission of Christ into the world is full of interest, and that interest is undying. It was the highest manifestation of God's love. It was the procuring cause of all the true happiness man can enjoy both in time and eternity. Even in our present state, with all its imperfections, if we view the work of Christ aright, it will afford us abundant consolation and good hope. But what, brethren, is all that can be experienced on earth, when compared with that which is to commence in heaven?—when hope passes into fruition,

and faith is swallowed up in sight—when perfect love casts out every fear, and when the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, shall be for 'ever in the midst of His people, and make them kings and priests unto God, to reign with Him for evermore. Can they, think you, who have received such blessings, ever weary in showing forth the praises of Him to whom they owe their all? Will it not be one of the chief springs of their joy, to think that their ascription of praise can never be interrupted, and shall never have an end?

The song of the Lamb—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever,"—is ever varying, yet ever the same—ever advancing, and yet never approaching a termination. Every remembrance of the past—every thought of the future, will serve to heighten the joy-inspiring strains of this song. When we recall the sorrows and trials which we had to encounter in the house of our pilgrimage—the doubts and fears which so frequently oppressed us, and the fulness of joy which is now our everlasting portion, can we doubt that it will

make our felicity more exquisite, our rest more sweet, and our song more rapturous ?

But, brethren, what should be the effect of such glorious prospects on the child of God now ?—what their effect on you and me ? We are yet in the midst of trials and tears—the toils and griefs of the Christian conflict are still many of them perhaps before us, and therefore we stand in need of some assuring confidence—some animating hope. But this is furnished both by the promises on which we rest, and the prospect that lies beyond the grave. Bear up, then, child of God, for all these things which are now so harassing will soon come to an end. After this mortal toil there is a rest prepared for the people of God. We are strangers and pilgrims on earth, but if we faint not by the way we shall at last arrive in the heavenly home. Here we have the battle to fight, but victory awaits us there. Here we have the race to run, but there we shall receive the prize. Here we have to sow in tears, but there we shall reap a harvest of joy. The years of this life are speedily gliding away, and as soon as we pass through the portals of death we shall be for ever beyond the power of our

great enemies, sin and satan. Be of good courage, then, soldier of the Cross, and endure the ills of the present time without repining, when you know that there is an eternity of happiness before you. Let this consideration support you amid all the trials of life and preserve you amid all the temptations of your spiritual adversaries. Go through the wilderness singing the songs of the heavenly Zion, assured of the sympathy and help of that Saviour, who

Though now ascended up on high,
Still bends on earth a brother's eye.

Though some tears may fall in the midst of your mirth and some notes of sadness mingle with your song, let not your heart fail, nor your faith waver, nor your hopes sink; for He whose heart was pierced with a deeper sorrow than yours, and whose life was one continued act of self-denial, has gone to heaven to prepare a place for you, where you shall for ever bear His image, rejoice in His presence, and sing His praise. Yes, brethren, the sorrows of earth are to be succeeded by the joys of heaven, and the emancipated spirit of the ransomed one shall immediately join in the melodious strains

of the countless multitudes, who are arrayed in white robes, and stand before the throne.

But, brethren, do not overlook the truth, that they, and they only, whose hearts are here attuned by communion with Christ and the gracious influences of the Spirit, shall ever be admitted within the precincts of the heavenly temple, where the songs of the redeemed are sung. They whose hearts and affections are set on the earth, and its enjoyments—who have no delight in the songs of Zion, but derive their chief pleasure from mingling in the world's mirth and revelry, are schooling themselves for a very different hereafter than that which awaits those who are to be engaged in singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Oh! that we were all of us taught here to lisp the song of the redeemed, for then would we be prepared to sing it for ever hereafter. Oh! that God would make us all trophies of His grace, by causing the Day-Star to arise in our hearts, and dispelling all the darkness of sin within us, then would we sing the songs of Zion in the land of our captivity, as a true preparation for singing them in full chorus, when the headstone of the

heavenly temple is brought forth with shouting, and when all the children of God are assembled in their Father's house. May God accompany with His blessing what has now been said ; and glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Amen:

SERMON VI

CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP.

"Our conversation is in heaven."—PHILIPPIANS iii. 20.

THE genuine Christian character stands out to view, in its just proportions and symmetrical form, when contrasted with that either of the hypocritical formalist, or the mere mammon-worshipper, just as natural objects are rendered more distinct by contrast. That stately elm, with its noble trunk and spreading boughs and thick foliage, appears all the more stately from its proximity to those half-withered pines with their gnarled stems and leafless branches. The sunshine never appears so bright and soft and sweet as when seen side by side with the deep shadow of a dark thunder cloud. Heaven itself appears to be a brighter land, and its music more sweet and charming, when contrasted with the blackness of outer darkness and

the weeping and wailing which fill the dwelling-place of the lost.

Now the reason why the picture of the Christian, which the text presents to the mind's eye, is so marked by its distinctness, is that it stands out in bold relief from the dark background of the previous context.

When the Apostle says, speaking for himself and for Christians generally, "Our conversation is in heaven," he gives expression to a noble faith—an undaunted courage—an exalted hope. His language bespeaks the possession of present joy, and the anticipation of future bliss. We have in his words a picture, the foreground of which represents the Christian pilgrim struggling through the briars and thorns, and climbing up the rugged cliffs of this weary wilderness, and in the distance are seen the towers and battlements of the celestial city—the river of the water of life, and all the unspeakable loveliness of the better land.

A more literal rendering of the text, and one that sets its deep significance in a clearer light, is, "Our citizenship is in heaven." This tells us that the Christian brotherhood, whatever be their standing in this world, have great and glorious things awaiting them in the world to come ;

when the golden gates of the New Jerusalem shall open to receive them, and when the welcome of the Heavenly King shall sound in their ears, and make their souls thrill with ecstatic joy.

The two points to which our attention is here specially called, are—(1) the Christian's present condition; and (2) his future destination. May we all have this testimony, that we have indeed cast in our lot with those of whom such glorious things are said.

In former times the freedom of a great city was wont to confer distinguished privileges, and entitle its possessor to certain honours and immunities. There were two ways in which this freedom might come to be enjoyed. It might be a man's birthright, or it might be conferred on him, in acknowledgment of some signal service rendered.

When Adam came from the creating hand of God, he was in the position of a free-born citizen of heaven, and had there been no forfeiture of his title, his posterity would have had this heavenly citizenship as their birthright. But transgression obliterated every natural claim to it, and it is only restored to any through the sacrifice and salvation of the Gospel. He, however, who has truly betaken Himself to the Cross of Christ for

safety, is privileged to believe that His title to an inheritance in the heavens is substantial and valid, and that his name is written in the register on high with the life-blood of Immanuel.

The fact that the Christian is a citizen of heaven shows distinctly that he is in a state of exile here, must feel himself surrounded by foreign influences, and know that he has much to contend with that is hostile to the interests and damaging to the prospects of one whose affections are set upon things above. In fulfilling the duties of a citizen of this world, in whatever sphere Providence has cast his lot, he never loses sight of the infinitely nobler distinction that has been put upon him in virtue of his union with Christ. It is surely a glorious privilege to be a member of that society whose rallying place is heaven,—whose employment is to celebrate the praises of their Redeemer—God,—whose members form one glorious brotherhood with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, evangelists and confessors. It is with those of this brotherhood who are to be found on earth that we are more immediately concerned. They mix with the world, but they are not of it. They look beyond its clay tabernacles, its gilded pleasures, its fleeting hopes, its

raging storms, its deceptive sunshine, its oppressive sorrows, its bitter disappointments, to where there are eternal mansions, enduring joys, perfect peace ; while here they are learning to speak the language of a foreign country, of which they delight to think, and where they long to dwell. The consciousness of their connection with the Jerusalem above prevents them oftentimes from succumbing to the ills of this life. Was it not the thought of his heavenly citizenship that sustained Abraham, when he sojourned in the land of promise, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob ? “ He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” When surrounded by all the splendours of Israel’s throne, was it not the good man David’s highest delight to celebrate in song the blessed privileges of the citizens of heaven, even in this the house of their pilgrimage ? In the lonely Isle of Patmos, left behind all his companions, the solitary exile found unspeakable comfort in the thought that he would soon join the blessed company of his fellow-apostles in the city of the saints. Ask yonder aged pilgrim, whose tottering limbs can scarcely support his feeble frame as he creeps slowly and softly along to lie down in his last resting place,

what it is that cheers him, and imparts such calmness and serenity to the evening of his days ; and he will tell you that he is drawing near to the gates of that city, towards which he has long been travelling,—that he is enrolled among the number of its citizens. My eternal home, he will say, is there, my Father and my friends are there,—all that I truly value is there ; and it is the hope of being soon admitted to the full enjoyment of its citizenship that sustains me now. Or ask that youth with the pale and sallow countenance, the slender body, and the skeleton looking hand, on whom disease has set the mark of the grave, why so happy, so composed, so ready to die ; and he will assure you that he is waiting in expectation of the summons to quit the tabernacle of clay, and take up his abode in the building of God. The heart-language of the citizen of heaven is, “ Let me go to the home which I love, to sing the songs which I have been trying to learn, and which I long to hear. Let me go from this land of blighted hopes and unsubstantial joys, to where there is nothing imperfect, no weakness, no separation, no death. Let me go from the sorrows and privations of the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan—the paradise of God—the

city of the great King." Whether under the buffetings of the world, or the ravages of disease, or the desolation of bereavement, there is no more powerful stay than to feel that we are citizens of heaven. How comforting to think, as we drop a tear into the grave of some dearly-beloved one, that it is but the tent in which he dwelt, the worn out garment of the flesh, which has been deposited in the narrow house, there to undergo a process of purification, which shall fit it for appearing in the bright array of the ransomed of the Lord! Weep not, then, O mourners, as you traverse the city of the dead, for they who, while on earth, were invested with the freedom of the city of God, have not their dwelling-place among those solitary tombstones. Their bodies, it is true, have to be subjected to the corruption and rottenness of the dark and noisome grave, but their spirits have entered that city which has no need of the sun to lighten it, nor of the moon to shine into it, for Jehovah Himself is its everlasting light.

What of all this, some one may say, if I have no means of knowing whether I am entitled to take the comfort implied in this citizenship to myself? But, brethren, there is a way of ascer-

taining the truth in this matter. They who are truly citizens of heaven are of a marked character. They live by faith, and thus seek to realise the hopes of the Gospel. They receive the revealed plan of salvation, and their hearts are filled with love to its Author. They think of what their Saviour has done and said and suffered, and their faith in Him is not a cold, formal profession of belief ; it is a life-like principle, which gives reality to the salvation offered in His name. Their love for Him is characterised by its depth, its sincerity, its warmth, and is as far removed from a fitful sentimentality on the one hand as from a calculating, mercenary, selfish affection on the other—an affection which has no more hold on the heart than has the religion of the hypocrite. They evidence their faith by their works, their love by their obedience, their sincerity by their practice.

If, brethren, this citizenship be yours, your affections will be in heaven, your thoughts will, as it were, instinctively turn to meditate on the indescribable glories which await you there. There your treasure is, and thither all your hopes point. You will feel as if you could leave all you have on earth, at any moment, in order to be put in full possession of your incorruptible inheritance.

2. I shall now refer, in a sentence or two, to *the final destiny of the Christian pilgrim.*

Heaven is the end of the Christian's journey—the realisation of his hopes—the completion of his joy, and the perfection of his happiness. Where heaven is we cannot tell ; what its occupations are has been but dimly revealed. The descriptions we have of it in the Bible are for the most part negative. They tell us what it is not, rather than what it is. In heaven there shall be no labour to fatigue the body, no cares to clog the mind. There there shall be no more sorrow, nor pollution, nor pain, no more suffering, no more sin, no more separation, no more death. There there shall be no mutability, no uncertainty. All shall be peace, harmony, blessedness, love, joy, perfect felicity. All that is implied in enjoying the continual presence of God, and holding high communion with Him—all that is implied in perfect exemption from sorrow and suffering, and in the assurance of unalloyed happiness—all that is implied in enjoying the undisturbed fellowship of the whole company of the redeemed, when they are for ever freed from the trammels of sense and sin, and breathe the life-giving atmosphere of the celestial city ; in short, all that is implied in

being sons of God, dwelling in their Father's house, and participating in the joys of angels, and being for ever beyond the dominion of pain, and misery, and death, awaits the Christian pilgrim when, arrived at the end of his journey, he lays down his pilgrim's staff.

Come, then, Christian wayfarer, press forward. Be not dismayed, though you encounter difficulties on your way to the holy city, for when you reach it, you will be amply rewarded for all your toils and perseverance and self-denial. Christian soldier, fight on, wield valiantly your spiritual weapons, demolish every stronghold of Satan, and plant the standard of the Cross in its place—seek to occupy the front rank in the battle, and faint not when it rages the fiercest and the hottest, for the Captain of Salvation will not fail to mark you out for distinction when He comes to reward His faithful followers, in the presence of the assembled universe.

Citizens of heaven, show yourselves worthy of your high destiny by manifesting that character, those dispositions and habits which are becoming in the freedmen of Christ, and the enfranchised of heaven. Let not the world, nor the things of the world, obtain an undue influence over you, for its

fleeting shows, its fascinating allurements, and its unsubstantial joys, can do little else than disqualify you for the unspeakable felicities of the city of the saints. Seek, then, to have a good foundation for the time to come, so that when you are taken out of the world, you may be received into the everlasting mansions, and crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, for this is the heritage of such as are citizens of heaven. God grant that all of us may be admitted to live and reign there with our glorified Redeemer for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE POOR
IN SPIRIT.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—MATTHEW V. 3.

IN that great masterpiece of Christian eloquence—the Sermon on the Mount,—it was a principal part of our Lord's design to show that the Gospel is the embodiment of the spirit of the Law, or, in other words, to point out the true nature of the kingdom which the promised Messiah was to establish. Living Christianity is, in our Lord's discourse, exhibited as the full development of the Divine and spiritual meaning which lay concealed under the outward forms of Judaism—the good things to come, of which the Law was but the shadow.

In the text, which contains the opening words of the sermon, our Lord points out one of the features of character by which the true subjects of His kingdom are distinguished. In order to bring out more distinctly this characteristic of the heirs of salvation, I shall, in the first place, describe certain marks which distinguish the poor in spirit, and then say something as to the blessedness promised to them. God grant that we all may be endowed with the spirit befitting the heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

Who, then, are the poor in spirit? It is almost unnecessary to say, in answer to this, that they are not such as constitute any class marked by some mere outward distinction or the sphere of life which they occupy.

The outward circumstances in which we are placed in this world may, and undoubtedly have, a great deal to do with the formation of our character; but these circumstances do not, of themselves, either exclude us from heaven, or open its sacred portals for our admission. The diadem of the prince, for example, does not prepare his temples for being encircled with a crown of glory any more than does the poverty

of the peasant preclude him from becoming a citizen of the New Jerusalem. The offer of grace and salvation is made to all indiscriminately to whom the Gospel is preached, and wherever that offer is not accepted the cause must be sought for in some moral delinquency in the heart of the hearer, and not in the adventitious circumstances of his worldly condition.

But not only is poverty of spirit not to be identified with any outward condition, there are also certain mental dispositions with which it must not be confounded. It must, for example, be distinguished from what may be designated poor-spiritedness,—a disposition alike unworthy of a man and a Christian. Nor must the poor in spirit be confounded with the spiritually poor. The man who is destitute of the spirit and grace of Christ,—whose religion is made up of certain external observances, who has a form of godliness while he is a stranger to its power, is spiritually poor, but is not poor in spirit. Self-righteousness and asceticism, fanaticism and all other phases of misjudged piety, are indications of spiritual poverty, although in a great measure incompatible with poverty of spirit.

So much for the negative aspect of this moral feature. Let us now view it on the positive side.

Poverty of spirit, then, consists essentially in a conviction of guilt and depravity. The man who is poor in spirit must have renounced all reliance on his own righteousness, having become conscious of the weight of guilt justly chargeable against him. Having taken an impartial survey of his character and conduct, he has not failed to discover that no act of his past life, if strictly scrutinized, can be pronounced untainted by guilt, or unmarked by the trail of the serpent. Feeling that it is so, he finds no place for self-righteousness, and therefore he sets himself not to yield to its insinuating influence.

Nor is this all; the man who is poor in spirit must feel, not only that guilt has characterised his past life throughout, but also that he can neither atone for what he has done amiss, nor of himself henceforth amend his ways, so as to lead a life of blameless holiness. He must, in short, feel his depravity, or be led to form an estimate of himself as humiliating as would be indicated by the admission that, although the hand-writing against him for the past were obliterated, the very first act or word or thought would, as if with magical power, render legible as ever the record of his guilt.

Thus, the man who is thoroughly convinced of his depravity, must see that the motive-principles of his being are diametrically opposed to the spirit of God's most holy law, and believing the fountain-head to be polluted, he ceases to expect purity in the streams that issue from it. Concluding that he is verily guilty, he is ready to exclaim, in the language of Job, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

Now, this conviction of guilt and depravity proves its vitality by leading the sinner to seek for some more sure ground of confidence than his own righteousness can afford. He then welcomes with rapturous delight the offers of grace and salvation, through the substitutionary sacrifice of the Son of God. The Gospel then, and not till then, appears to him to be glad tidings of great joy, —to be liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound—to be light in the midst of darkness, and complete deliverance from the guilt and condemnation of sin. It opens wide the gates of salvation to

the mightiest and the meanest, and he who truly and fully receives it, enters triumphantly on the wings of faith and love into the presence-chamber of the Almighty, arrayed in the robes of his Redeemer's righteousness.

Wherever the conviction of depravity is genuine, and sends the convicted sinner to the Saviour, it is accompanied by a feeling of true humility, and here we have another characteristic of those whom the text pronounces blessed.

Even though man had retained his primitive innocence, nothing would have been better suited to his condition than the practice of humility. Thinking of the distance which separated him from the great Author of his being, and of his own absolute dependence on His bounty, pride would have no room to rear its lofty head, or enthrone itself in the affections of his sinless soul. It may, with reason, be thought, that the brightest archangel is filled with a feeling of comparative unimportance, rendering him, of all creation, at once the highest and the most lowly ; for the vapour of vanity cannot float in the ethereal atmosphere which surrounds the throne of the Eternal. But, as a fallen creature, man comes under a peculiar obligation to be humble and self-

abased. In this state assuredly he has nothing to be proud of. The crown has fallen from his head, and he has forfeited his title to eternal life. The seeds of disease and ultimate dissolution have been sown in his frame. The affections of his heart have been alienated from their rightful object, the powers of his mind have been darkened, and his whole nature, physical and intellectual, moral and spiritual, has felt the blasting effects of transgression.

The grace of humility, which is becoming in man as a creature, and obligatory on him as a fallen creature, is absolutely an essential element in his character as a Christian. Spiritual pride is incompatible with the reception of grace. "God giveth grace to the humble, but the proud He knoweth afar off." "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." If the Christian would think of the miserable condition from which, through the grace of God, he has been rescued,—his own powerlessness to battle with, and overcome the various obstacles to his heavenward progress, and the example of Him who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor—who humbled Himself and became obedient

unto death, and who has invited us to learn of Him, for He was meek and lowly of heart, he would have incitements enough to the cultivation of humility.

Now, as to the blessedness pronounced upon the poor in spirit. "Blessed are they," says our Lord, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The phrase, *the kingdom of heaven*, is used in Scripture to denote two states distinct from each other, and yet inseparably linked together so that the one is the full development of the other. These are a state of grace here, and a state of glory hereafter. For certain aspects of the subject with which I am dealing, it may be indifferent which of these meanings we attach to it in the text; it yet seems preferable, on the whole, to restrict it to the kingdom of glory hereafter. The poor in spirit are no doubt under the kingdom of grace here, else they could never be admitted into the kingdom of glory hereafter; but they are only subjects in the former, whereas they are to be sovereigns in the latter. In the former they have many enemies to encounter, and many trials to endure, but in the latter they shall be hailed as conquerors, and every cause of unrest for ever

removed. Thus it seems that the antithesis between the frame of mind by which they are described, and the exaltation which awaits them, is better thought out by understanding the phrase as referring more particularly to the happiness of heaven. They are poor in spirit now, but in heaven they shall be enriched with treasures better far than any earth can yield. There, their hope shall be swallowed up in fruition, their faith ripened into sight. Here they are poor, but there they shall have entered on the full enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Here they are in a state of pupilage, there they shall have come into the possession of their inheritance.

Would you, brethren, have your brows encircled with unfading crowns, and be ranked with those who are destined to occupy eternal thrones? Would you enjoy true happiness in this world, and have the possession of unmingled joy secured to you in the world to come? Then cultivate the spirit spoken of in the text. Are you rich, —possessed of the means of satisfying your real wants, and, it may be, gratifying many artificial indulgences? Then think who it is that thus crowns you with His bounty, and let the

thought deepen your sense of dependence. Oh, be not puffed up with pride, though you may have influence to command the obsequious services of a train of sycophants; for be assured of this, that all the pomp and pageantry of the world cannot satisfy the cravings of the immortal soul. When the vain man, divested of his short-lived importance, has passed through the Jordan of death, and arrived on the shores of the eternal world, will he then find that his life of indulgence and self-glorification has secured for him a joyous reception in that unknown land? What will his boasted greatness, or the riches on which he set his soul, avail him then? Will he not then feel, though he never felt so before, that the splendour with which he appeared to be surrounded was as unreal as the veriest phantom of the imagination—that he was but arrayed in borrowed feathers, and that he had throughout been leaning on a broken reed? Sad, indeed, must be the condition of that man who passes into eternity trusting in a delusion, and then, for the first time, becomes conscious of the true character of the foundation of his hopes. Be not deceived, therefore, brethren, for be assured that as you

sow now, you shall reap hereafter. If you sow the wind of vanity, you shall only reap the whirlwind of destruction. Be not deceived; for if you worship the world while here, you will assuredly receive your reward hereafter. Be not deceived; for although you attain to the highest eminence among men, and go down to the grave ripe in age and full of glory, and have your names handed down to posterity as watchwords among those who are ambitious of earthly greatness, yet all this will avail you nothing when you are arraigned before the judgment-seat of Him who knows the secrets of your hearts, for there is no respect of persons with Him.

To those of you who are poor in spirit, there are many sources of comfort and happiness accessible, even whilst you journey through this world. You may be rich or you may be poor in the good things of this life, but there is laid up for you in heaven a treasure, compared with which earth's wealth dwindles into insignificance. Whatever be the estimate the world forms of you, it is for your sakes that God's goodness continues to be manifested in the course of nature—that the wicked are made to prosper and participate in the bounties of His

providence here, and that the world and all the works that are therein have not been burnt up, and the predicted new order of things inaugurated. Let me urge you who have fled for refuge to the hope of the Gospel, to cling more and more to Him in whom all fulness dwells. Call to mind all that He has done for you, and you will have evidence of a love stronger than death,—a love, too, which still glows in the bosom of His glorified humanity for you who believe in His name. Your fellow-men may esteem you but little, and when you leave this world the loss may be felt by but few, and your names remembered only by those who are immediately connected with you, but still you are esteemed of more value by the Son of God than the whole world in which you dwell, and your names shall be held in everlasting remembrance by the saints of God in their heavenly home. Be not dismayed, therefore, nor discouraged, but let this thought animate you, that your Redeemer has gone to heaven to prepare a place for you, and that He will come again and receive you to Himself. You may rest assured that He is not indifferent to your well-being, for though He be exalted to His throne in heaven,

His eye rests with peculiar tenderness and affection on all those whom He has purchased with His blood, and who are here being disciplined for the fellowships above. God grant that all of us to whom the word of this salvation has come, may be brought under its influence, and that having passed through this wilderness, we may at last arrive in our Father's house, there to dwell for evermore. AMEN.

SERMON VIII.

HEART-PURITY,

AND

THE VISION OF GOD FOR WHICH IT PREPARES.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."—ST. MATTHEW V. 8.

PURITY, even in the lowest and most material sense, is a thing greatly to be desired and highly to be prized; since pollution is the parent of disease and the propagator of misery and wretchedness. But when we come to consider purity, in its moral aspects, the desirableness of having it as a possession is immensely increased. In this case it is synonymous with innocence of life, and that is not only a most blessed thing in itself, and fraught with blessing to its possessor, but it is also a centre of blessed influence to all with whom he comes in contact. But even this is not the highest kind of purity of which

man is susceptible. He is a spiritual as well as a moral being, and hence there is a purity belonging to this part of his nature. It is to this highest kind of purity—this purity of the inner life, that the text specially refers. It bestows blessings higher and nobler far than those which flow from the other kinds of purity. It indeed proves our affinity to the holiness of the Divine nature. Light, which is the symbol of God Himself, is the emblem of this purity. It is this more than anything else which tends to make the Christian life a life of fellowship with God—a life hid with Christ in Him.

In bringing the subject of heart-purity under your consideration, I shall endeavour to answer the two questions naturally suggested by the text, namely :

1. *Who are the pure in heart? And,*
2. *Wherein consists their peculiar happiness?*

May the Divine Spirit influence and incline our hearts to that which is well pleasing in the sight of God.

1. A very good way of arriving at a knowledge of who the pure in heart are, is to make use of the principle of contrast; that is, by setting off the quality we wish to illustrate by

means of its opposite. Thus the picture of an impure heart will serve to give greater distinctness to that of one which is pure.

Now, that heart is impure which feels no need of purity. Its language is, "I am rich and have need of nothing," whereas it is poor and polluted and destitute. It is in a state of spiritual insensibility, than which nothing can be more dangerous and fatal. The case is precisely analogous to that of the sick man, who declares that there is nothing the matter with him, although all the while your senses tell you that he is on the very brink of the grave.

Again, that heart is impure which gives full scope to the natural propensity to work iniquity. The man who treats sin so as to grant it the greatest possible indulgence, consistently with his pride, or position, or worldly prospects, is one whose heart is impure. There is great variety in their treatment of sin among those who are wedded to it. There are those who are willing to give up all their sins but one. Some favourite, which has entwined itself completely around their heart, they will not consent to renounce. Others try to conceal their sins and so pursue the path of iniquity, while they

endeavour to withdraw their conduct from the public gaze. They resemble the man who shuts the door of his shop and put the shutters on his windows on the Sunday, but admits his customers by another entrance, and carries on his trade as on other days. Thus many seem to forsake their sins who only hide them from the eye of others. They who give the reins to their unhallowed inclinations take delight in iniquity. No one eats with more relish of the dish he loves, than the wicked man does of the forbidden fruit of sin. Nay, more; he makes provision for the flesh and caters for his lusts. He fore-castes, and schemes, and makes sacrifices even, in order that he may satiate himself with sinful indulgence. Those who thus indulge their sinful propensities and make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of the same, disregarding alike the warning voice of God's word, and the earnest entreaties of His servants, give unmistakeable evidence of impurity of heart.

Once more, that heart is impure which is full of unbelief. An unbelieving heart is a fountain poisoned and polluted in its springs. There is nothing so dishonouring to God as unbelief—nothing that so hardens the heart as this—He

that believes not God's threatenings, will not fear Him ; he that believes not God's promises will not love Him. Infidelity is the parent of a vast progeny of sins, all of which are polluting to the soul, and are a sure index of impurity in the heart. *

I shall now try to give an outline of the other picture, by directing attention to a few of the indications of a pure heart.

The first of these I would notice is, *sincerity*—that guilelessness of spirit so essential to the humble walk with God. It implies that the service rendered to God is a hearty and not a hypocritical service. The whole of the hypocrite's religion is on the outside, the heart has nothing to do with it. There may be nothing to find fault with in him, so far as externals go ; but pass into the region of his motives, and you will find that all is hollow and false there. Outwardly there is all the appearance of sound and living godliness, but within there is the corruption of an unrenewed heart, and the festering of a diseased soul. It is just like what so frequently happens in consumption—the colour bright and the face beauteous, but the lungs diseased and the vital energy all but spent. But

unlike the hypocrite, the man of sincerity will bear inspection as to his inner life and motives ; and the more these are known the more sterling will he be found to be. It is the homage of his heart which he offers to God, and not the mockery of a divided affection. Instead of shrinking from having his religious character tested, his prayer to God is, " Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." He courts the light, frequently calls himself to account, and seeks to be well assured of his title to be ranked among the children of God, to prevent his being deceived as to the evidence of his sonship. Weeds are oftentimes apt to be taken for flowers ; the lamps of the foolish virgins looked as if they had oil in them. The sincere soul, being ever jealous, often opens the court of conscience, and subjects the life to the ordeal of a strict and impartial examination.

A second mark of a pure heart is, that it *yearns after purity*. The attainment of holiness is the paramount desire of such a heart. The true Christian desires purity far more than any worldly distinction or reward ; for he knows

that it is the court dress of heaven, and will prove his true adornment when these shall have lost all charm.

A third mark of a pure heart is, that *it abhors all sin*. There is a vast and most important difference between abstaining from the commission of sin, and abhorring it. A man may cease from acts of transgression, without being of pure heart, but he cannot abhor sin unless he has tasted the blessedness of the pure. A man may give up sin from fear. He may dread the immediate consequences, the bitterness of which he may have learned from past experience, and on that account may deny himself the pleasure of indulgence. In such a case it is not the crookedness of the serpent He fears, but its sting. But it is not so with him who is possessed of that purity of heart which is above all price. He can truly say, "I hate every false way."

A fourth mark of a pure heart is, that *it performs holy duties in a holy manner*. It does not rashly or inconsiderately enter upon the performance of any solemn duty, but prepares itself for all stated religious exercises and ordinances, by previous meditation and earnest

prayer. Thus it comes in a prepared state, to receive the seed of the word and the blessing from on high. Whenever this is not the case, God is served in a dead and careless manner, and such service accordingly is as useless as it is insulting. The pure heart is like ground that has been well prepared for the seed, and so it goes about all the exercises of religion in a solemnly impressed and devout spirit.

Finally, here : a pure heart is, speaking generally, *associated with a pure life*. The pure in heart endeavour, with God's help, to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Where there is a good conscience there will generally be a good conversation. When the fountain is pure, we may expect the streams issuing from it to be pure also. Purity of life is the outward index of inward purity, just as the hands moving on the dial of the clock indicate the movements within. I don't say that we can infer invariably and infallibly from the outward conduct what the state of the heart is, but it is the only ground we have to go upon in forming our judgments ; and it is, upon the whole, the safest we can occupy in the

circumstances of our condition. I am aware that the stream from a pure fountain may become partially polluted by having impurities poured into it from other sources, and that the stream from a polluted fountain, may, as it flows on, assume the appearance of being purified in consequence of extraneous agencies ; but in the one case the pollution is only partial, and in the other the purity only apparent. In the same way there may be blots in the outward life, which have nothing corresponding to them in the heart, and an apparently blameless conduct where the heart is full of wickedness and deceit. Yet there is a general consistency—an identity of moral character—between the motives of the heart and the actions of the life.

2. Let me now turn to the second question which I proposed to answer, and my answer must be extremely brief.

The text tells us, that the peculiar blessedness of the pure in heart consists in their seeing God. Now, it is obvious that the sight of God promised to them must have some peculiarity about it, making it specially desirable, for the mere seeing of God is not by any means confined to them. "Behold," says the apostle, "He cometh with

clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." The vision of God, to which the text specially refers, and which is represented as the peculiar privilege and exalted destiny of the pure in heart, is that which awaits the faithful when the scales of mortality fall from their eyes, and the secrets of the invisible world are disclosed to their view. Then the veil will be drawn, which now hides heaven from our sight, and God will show Himself in all His glory and majesty to the ransomed and perfected soul.

But concerning this blessed vision of God, it is impossible that I should speak particularly. On this subject our blessed Saviour uniformly maintained a solemn, silent, and most dignified reserve. But though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, the Scriptures yet enable us to form some faint anticipation of their nature. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." We only now see Him through the glass of His ordinances darkly and dimly; but

then we shall see Him face to face in all the glory and excellence of His unveiled majesty. What a transcendent and surpassingly glorious sight will it be, when we behold our Saviour—God, wearing the robe of our human nature—and see that nature enshrined in glory above the angels! This heavenly vision of God, too, we are led to believe will be a transforming sight. It would seem that the perfections of God are to be reflected back on His worshipping and rejoicing children. “Beholding the glory of God, we shall be changed into the same image.” As the crystal, when the sun shines upon it, sparkles and looks like the sun, so the saints, by beholding the brightness of God’s glory, shall, to a certain degree, be resplendent with it. Oh, what an image of happiness is presented to us in this growing assimilation! How unspeakable the blessedness of evermore approximating the likeness of the greatest, the wisest, and the best of all Beings! What bliss ineffable is implied in this progressive elevation of the soul—to see and be eternally transformed into the very loveliness of God! Brethren, having this hope within us, let us purify ourselves even as God is pure. That purity of heart, by which

the soul is prepared for those ravishing delights, is the believer's possession on this side the grave. The pure in heart attain to that communion with God here, which shall be extended and perpetuated hereafter. This attainment is in virtue of their union with Christ. We cannot come to God but by Him; we cannot see God but through Him. Oh, then, let us, through this new and living way, seek to be made partakers of that holiness without which we shall never see God in the sense of rejoicing in His presence and bearing His image.

Oh, brethren, let me entreat you to place all your confidence in Him, "Whom, not having seen, we love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,"—place all your confidence in Him, and He will fill you with joy and peace, while He feeds you with heavenly manna, refreshes you with the water of life, and wraps you in the mantle of His love,—place all your confidence in Him, and He will guide you by His grace and Spirit, hold fellowship with you throughout life, and at last receive you into His heavenly kingdom.

SERMON IX.

THE SHEPHERD'S CARE.

I.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."—

PSALM XXIII. 1.

DAVID in his younger days kept the sheep of his father Jesse, on the mountains of Judea ; by day he led them to the green pastures, where they loved to be, and when the stars shone out, and the mists lay in the valleys, he gathered them in some sheltered hollow, and watched them through the long night. David *was* a shepherd ; but David *had* a Shepherd to whom he looked, even as his sheep looked to him for guidance and for protection. "THE LORD is *my* Shepherd," he says, and adds, "I

shall not want." And David never did want any good thing, even though he was sometimes hungry and thirsty, and hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the true Shepherd of whom David was but a type. Oh, the tenderness of His sweet words, "I am the good Shepherd." Oh, how convincing the proof He gives of the fact, "I lay down My life for the sheep." Oh, Thou who lovest Thine own more than life itself, fain would we form a portion of Thy favoured flock !

When Christ first began His shepherding, He had but few sheep. By day and by night He kept them near Him, till the sword awoke against Him, and He was smitten. Then, for a moment they were scattered—but He rose, gathered the feeble flock once more, and committed it to under-shepherds to keep, till He, the Chief Shepherd, should return, promising to be with them always, even to the end of the world. And so far He has kept His promise. How often has He sheltered them from storm of trouble since,—how frequently delivered them from the thorn hedges of care and difficulty,—and how often, when He has seen them strug-

gling in the deep waters of the dark river of death, has He taken them in His Almighty arms, and carried them right across to Canaan! And He will fulfil His promise to the end! For no single lamb shall be wanting when the great flock shall reach the glorious fold at last, but presenting all His sheep spotless before His Father, who gave them to Him, with exceeding joy, will the Good Shepherd declare, "I have kept them in Thy name, and not one of them is lost!"

Note, now, what the Shepherd does for His sheep. First, "He maketh them to lie down in green pastures." Yes! Jesus does this for each of His people. Ah, soul! knowest thou by experience the repose of those green pastures? Rest and food and fulness of joy are found nowhere else! These are the only oases in the hot and sandy desert. Rest thou in them; follow Jesus; by His Spirit He will lead thee into rich fields of meditation on the truths of Scripture; into sweet meadows of communion with Himself; into peaceful prayer and grateful praise, and quiet and glad expectation. He will lead thee to "Wait on the Lord," to "Rest in the Lord," to "Rejoice in the Lord

always," and to hope in God, thy "Exceeding joy." And through these green pastures wander "Still waters," to refresh the thirsty soul. He leadeth me, not beside the stormy sea, or the stagnant pool, or the rippling shallows of the rivulet; no, but beside the deep full "Waters of quietness," beside the river of life, the stream of salvation, which maketh glad the city of God. From the smitten rock flowed the water that followed Israel in the wilderness, "And that Rock was Christ,"—a figure of Christ. From *Christ only* canst thou, my soul, draw life and refreshment, and joy and peace; for there is no other name given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved. Dost thou thirst with some deep unsatisfied desire for thou knowest not what? Hast thou tried to quench that thirst with the foul and bitter waters of the world? Oh, abandon the attempt! Believe that—

"Jesus only, He can give,
Peace and comfort while we live;
Jesus only can supply,
Boldness when we're called to die."

Sweet as are the green pastures, and delicious the cool abundant waters, the sheep will wander at times! Even in Paradise, Adam wandered

from God ; and we have all wandered too. David himself was a wanderer, and he wandered far and long. We are not better than David. Oh that we all had David's experience of grace. For, hearken ! What is that he is singing to the softest accompaniment his harp can warble ? What doeth thy Shepherd for thee, O thou sweet Psalmist of Israel, when thou hast forsaken Him ? "He restoreth my soul,"—again and again the strains resound. HE, Jehovah, restoreth my soul. Aye ! who but *He* could ? "He restoreth my SOUL,"—not my crown or my kingdom—my health or my wealth—but my soul. "He restoreth my soul." Oh, Christian friends, can we not echo the strain ? Every sinner is a wanderer from God, and Christ came *on* purpose to restore the wanderer. He sought out guilty sinners, in order that He might save them ; and when sinners who felt not their sin, wanderers who knew not how far they had erred, blamed him for it, saying indignantly, "This fellow receiveth *sinners* !" they only drew from His gracious lips a fuller statement of the fact, that He had come from heaven to earth on purpose to seek and to save *the lost*. Oh, how He who spake as never man spake, painted in His

peerless parables, the joy of the Restorer and the happiness of the restored! You remember His description of the Shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep that were in safety to seek the single one that was lost? How he "went after it," over hill and dale, amid ravines and rocks, in storm and darkness it may be, in danger and in weariness; "went after it," patiently pursuing the wanderer, "*until he found it*," and who, when he had found it, did not *drive* it home, chastising, with rod and staff, its folly and perversity, but *carried* it, carried it *Himself*, carried it in His own *bosom*, carried it all the way, and carried it *rejoicing*.

Blessed Lord Jesus! Wert thou painting a portrait of Thyself? Can it be that Thou, amid Thy glory, carest for weak, worthless wanderers such as we are? Have we power to gladden Thee, Thou King of glory, by yielding to Thy saving grace and resting in Thine arms of mercy? Dare we believe it, dare we hope it? We dare; we do; for lo! we hear Thine own voice assure us, that there is "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

"He leadeth me in paths of righteousness."
Paths of righteousness! Fit paths those for a

restored soul ; blessed paths of purity and peace ; hard to tread it may be, yet happy because the only paths that lead heavenward ; paths that our feet too must tread if we would sit down in the kingdom of God, with Jesus Christ, the righteous, and those who have followed in His footsteps. But suppose we ask the poet-king, " What sort of paths were they, David ? were they strewn with flowers and bright with sunshine, easy to tread, and quick to conduct thee to rest ? " For a sufficient answer he points back with a sad smile to the scorn and jealousy of his brethren so meekly endured, the fierce attack of Goliath so manfully resisted, the cruel persecution of Saul, so magnanimously forgiven, to the manifold enemies of Israel overcome, to the great works for God accomplished, to the stern struggles of his faith, and the bitter tears of his repentance over unrighteous deeds, to the long series of domestic trials sent on him by God as chastisement for iniquity ; and as we glance over the paths in which he was led, we feel these paths of righteousness *may be rough paths*, although they lead heavenward ! Christian, be not discouraged because of the way. If Christ be thy leader, fear not to follow : " The

steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord,
and He delighteth in his way," and even in the
worst place thou mayest sing,—

"The way may be rough,
But it cannot be long,
I'll smooth it with hope,
And I'll cheer it with song."

But these paths of righteousness may lead
right down into deep dark valleys, full of pits
and perils. "Yea," says David, foreseeing this,
"though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou
art with me." His heart quailed not, but his
courage rose at the prospect, and in full assur-
ance of faith he fearlessly faces the danger. "I
will fear no evil, for Thou art with me!"

What, David? fear no evil? not even if you
have to pass at times through troubles "deep
as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dangerous
as death?"

"I will fear no evil!"

What! though your whole life is a passage
through a wicked world buried deep in dark
shadows of death?

"I will fear no evil!"

What! not even when you come to the awful
closing hours, and approach the mysterious

separation between soul and body, and the launch into the ocean of eternity ?

“I will fear no evil!”

O, David, why thus confident? thou a poor, frail, and feeble sinner ?

“Why ?” do you ask, friends ? Why does the sheep fearlessly follow the shepherd even into deep valleys and dark woods ? Ah ! listen again to the sweet Psalmist of Israel, as looking up to God, he gives a reason for his boldness ; “I will fear no evil, for THOU art with me.” Thou, my gracious Shepherd ! Thou, whose very glance can make darkness light ; Thou wilt never leave me nor forsake me ! *Thou art with me.* Perhaps, dear friends, some of you do not share this happy confidence, as you look forward to death. A believer in Jesus, whose sins are forgiven, and who has eternal life as the free gift of God, need not fear death. For him death has no sting, and the grave no terror ; for the sting of death is sin. To a *forgiven* sinner death is but the gate of life, “to die is gain.” But some Christians, believing this, still fear death itself—not its consequence, but the act of dying. Ah ! did you ever stand on the edge of a dark valley filled to the brim with the mists of night, in

the early morning ere the sun rise? Have you seen the beams of the rising sun turn those black mists to golden clouds? So, dear child of God, when you come to the brink of thy valley of death, which looks to you now so dark, God will open the gates of glory on the other side, and so fill and flood the valley with light that your fears shall vanish like the darkness—and you, too, shall “fear no evil.”

However he may have regarded it in life, to the dying saint, we firmly believe, death is no “King of terrors.” With a true inspiration, has Sir Noel Paton depicted the Christian’s last experience, in his exquisite picture, called “*Mors Janua Vitæ*.” There kneels the expiring warrior, just outside the gate of glory; the dark valley, with its conquered difficulties and dangers, lies behind him; and ready to open the gate there stands—Who? What? The king of terrors, with his skeleton form, and his sharp scythe? Yes, it is he, and yet you see him not, or discern him with difficulty. What is that you see? A fair and radiant angel smiles with heavenly benignity on the expiring soldier of Jesus Christ. Can that be death? It is; but, death transfigured! Lo! through the

pure angelic drapery there gleam on one side, the bare and ghastly ribs of the skeleton king, one hand and one foot, and one half the face are still dimly his, but merging, melting, and passing away in the glory of that blessed transfiguration, into forms of angelic beauty and glory! It is death; but death swallowed up of life, opening the gates of glory, that the redeemed may enter in!

Christian! this is all that awaits thee at the last, thanks to the forgiving grace of God—therefore, **FEAR THOU NO EVIL.**

SERMON X.

THE SHEPHERD'S CARE.

II.

"Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

PSALM XXIII. 4.

DID you ever see a man fording a river on foot? Taking his staff, he goes down into the water, feeling his way as he goes. When he comes to a deep place, he puts down the staff first, in order to find the bottom, and having felt it, he takes the step with confidence, and so passes safely through.

Christian! if you are called to wade through deep waters of affliction, wherein you fear to sink, put down the staff of precious promises; you shall feel the Rock of Ages beneath you,

and so cross safely over. When the waves of the Red Sea rolled at the feet of Moses, did he not, with the rod of God, smite them and part them asunder? So with the rod of faith we can part even the waters of Jordan, and go over dry-shod.

When, however, David said of his Divine Shepherd, "Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me," he was thinking rather of the shepherd's rod and staff. He remembered the time when he used to carry the shepherd's staff to guide his father's flock, and the rod to keep them from straying; and he seems to say, "It is a comfort to me to think that Thou, O Lord, wilt keep me thus from straying into dangers and destruction, wilt ward off any enemy that would do me hurt, and be ever close at hand to guide me with Thy staff, even when I see Thee not." "Thou preparest," also, "a table before me in the midst of mine enemies."

All that our bodies and souls need, for time and for eternity, is stored up within God's hand, and in order to give He has but to open His hand. "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Oh, how often He opens that hand for us.

Giving, giving evermore. Day by day, and hour
by hour, He

"Loads every moment as it flies,
With benefits unsought."

And what does He ask from us in return? Why, nothing but love. Man cannot give to God, and God cannot receive from man. Yea, in the deepest sense, man cannot give, and God cannot receive at all. God is the great Giver, and only God can give. "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and God must needs have the more blessed place. All He asks from man is his heart—his affections; "My son, give Me thine heart."

"Thou anointest my head with oil." Elsewhere we read that the Lord Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Does David mean the same here? We know not; at any rate, the Lord does anoint His people with gladness. True religion is never gloomy and sad; it makes its possessor happy, yea, fills him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The man whose sins are forgiven, and who knows it; the man who has eternal life, who is a child and heir of God, and on his way to endless glory, ought to be as happy as the day is long.

He ought to be like the sea I was gazing at on a journey lately, brightly shining in the summer's sun, over which the wind came careering with unbounded and outstretched pinions, rolling along the surges, that flashed like liquid silver; it was smiles on its surface and sunshine in its depths! And the Christian's heart should be the same; and in countless instances it is the same, thank God, for Christ anoints them with the oil of gladness. How can any one be really happy until he becomes a child of God? There can be no happiness unless peace lie at its root; joy is a fruit that will not grow on the tree of care and anxiety, or on the bushes of fear, and "There is no peace," saith God, "to the wicked;" "The way of peace they have not known." But Christians possess a peace that passeth understanding, a peace that flows from the knowledge that God is reconciled to them, and that they are accepted in the Beloved. Oh the peace and joy of feeling the hand of a forgiving Father laid in love on you! Oh the joy of being permitted to lay one's head on the bosom of Jesus; and to feel beneath one the soft heavings of infinite and unutterable love!

Such a one can lie down in peace at night,

and sing his soul away in slumber ; or he can wake in the darkness and fear no evil, saying, "Under His wings do I trust ;" he can sleep again, feeling, 'tis the same to me whether I awake in this world or in the next, for wherever I awake I shall be still with Jesus ; and when he awakes in the morning, hope smiles down on him, joy dwells in his heart, and he goes on his way rejoicing, singing and making melody in his heart. No man is happy unless he is a Christian—the holtest Christian is the happiest. And does the believer's happiness stand the test of adverse circumstances, of trial and trouble ? Look at those two men—there they lie, on the damp cold floor of a dungeon at midnight ; their backs are sore with scourgings, and wet with blood ; they are famished and sleepless, and their feet fast in the stocks. But, hark ! what joyous tones are those that steal through the dungeon vaults, and die in the distance ? What voices are these that in sacred song break the midnight silence with music, which, echoing through the prison cells, catches the ears of the captives, and makes them tremble with astonishment ? The persecuted apostles are singing the praises of God ! They

are cast down, but not destroyed ; sorrowful, yet still rejoicing ; poor, yet making many rich. Oh, happiness most heavenly and incomparable, that makes men rejoice in tribulation also ! One look of love from Christ, beheld by faith, can so transport the soul as to make other joys seem joyless in comparison, and all sorrow endured for His sake, joy !

But David, who had been himself anointed with oil, *as king*, may have had that scene also in his mind's eye when he wrote, "Thou anointest my head with oil." As Samuel came to him, so the Lord Jesus Christ comes to us as our great High Priest, clad in the white robe of purity, bearing on His bosom the names of His people ; He calls to Himself the poor and the outcast, the wretched and the helpless. He calls some from dark dungeons and some from miserable attics, some from straw thatched cottages and some from joyous palaces, some from the earth's great cities and some from its lonely deserts. He calls them all to Himself, and having sprinkled on them the atoning blood, which cleanseth from all sin, and clothed them in the robe of righteousness, He then pours on their hearts the heavenly oil of the Holy Spirit, sets

them apart for the service of God, and thus makes them kings and priests for ever.

Who can estimate this one great blessedness—the being for ever indwelt by God the Holy Ghost? That Spirit of power, that Spirit of love, that Spirit of holiness, is also a Spirit of gladness—an oil of gladness. Ah! well may all who enjoy this abiding presence, sing, “My cup runneth over.”

Friends! are you conscious of this overflowing fulness of blessing? Say not, because you may have lost health or wealth or friends or relatives, my cup is half empty. Oh, no! Empty! and you a child of God? Empty! and your sins forgiven? Empty! and God Himself dwelling in you by His Spirit? Ah! say not so. It is full! It runneth over! There are cups of different sorts and sizes and materials. David’s cup may have been of gold; thine only silver, or lead, or wood; but thine may be as full, or fuller than his. You may look into many a golden cup and find it empty, save for the dust that lies in it; and you may climb the hill side on a summer’s day, and resting beneath the shadow of an overhanging rock, by the road-side spring you may find a cup of rusty iron

bound with a chain to the spot, and filled with cool clear water ; and there is many a rich man whose cup of gold is empty, save of dust ; and many a poor man, bound by the covenant of grace, as with a chain, to Christ, the Rock of Ages, whose cup, beneath the unfailing spring, is always overflowing.

And now note David's hope as to the future. —“Surely,” he says, “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” Blessed assurance, which shuts out fear from the heart that enjoys it. The Good Shepherd goeth before, and leadeth His sheep. In the valley He is beside it, comforting it with His rod and staff ; and lo, behind the sheep, follow on these glorious rear guards, goodness and mercy. What an honour to have such attendance ! Look at yon nobleman, with his two liveried servants behind him : his very retinue bespeaks his dignity. Look at yon poor Christian widow : you do not see her retinue ; but oh, it is more glorious far ! Angels, bright sister angels, who have come all down her pathway of life are following her ; when she lies down at night on her hard pallet, and draws her thin coverlet over her, their wings overshadow her as they keep their

watch. The name of the one is "goodness;" and the name of the other "mercy;" and when she departs, goodness shall take one hand and mercy the other, and with their strong white wings they shall bear her upward to the place where sorrow cannot come, and then having followed her all through her home of darkness, they shall follow her through her eternity of glory all the days of her life everlasting.

And then David concludes, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." There are some who would be satisfied were it possible to dwell here for ever; but not so David, and not so any soul that knows the Lord as its Shepherd. This may be, and is a fine house, with its great dome of blue above, and its many coloured curtains of clouds, and its flower-spangled carpet of green grass. But O! it is not God's house; only His footstool! Who shall describe the habitation where He dwelleth in light which no man may approach unto? We may speak of its trees of life and its fountains and rivers of living waters, of its golden streets and pearly gates; but these are but dim outward images, borrowed from things of sense. Suffice it that there is such

a place, perfect in every way, the choice work of the Great Architect of the universe, where the people of His pasture shall dwell for ever with their Shepherd king. This is heaven, and this is home; yea, God's house and home, and ours, if we are his. And if we are *not*, what shall we do to become His? I can only point you to Christ Himself and bid you believe on Him! O, see those eyes that were once dim with tears, now beaming with love on you, poor sinner! See those hands once clasped in prayer, once pierced on Calvary, outstretched to receive you. Only look to Him in faith, and He will be your soul's good Shepherd even unto death, and give you an eternal life beyond the grave, in which goodness and mercy shall follow you still.

SERMON XI.

CHRIST'S MEASURELESS LOVE.

"The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

EPHESIANS iii. 15.

SCRIPTURE has many paradoxes. How could Paul, the apostle, be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; poor, yet making many rich ; having nothing, yet possessing all things ?

Why did he pray for the Ephesian Christians that they might "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge?" Is that an impossibility? No! friend, no! though at first sight you might deem it such.

We can never know it all, but we may know much of the measureless love of Jesus, our Lord ; yes! even on earth, much, and in heaven, oh how much more, while it will still remain for ever a love that passeth knowledge. I may take a dim taper into a dark room ; it

fails to illumine more than a little circle, but I may increase the power of the light, till every nook and corner of the apartment shall be fully revealed; so these are subjects which the more we dwell on them the better we understand them, till at last we come to knowledge fully. But take now a taper into the pitch-dark midnight, under a starless, moonless sky, increase its power a thousand fold, ten thousand fold; the increased circle of light only shews an increased circle of dark all around it, and it is thus with the mystery we meditate now. We may light the torch of truth, and go forth into the boundless expanse of the love of Christ, and see more of it than ever we saw before; but we shall only find that there is more beyond our powers of perception than we had previously supposed before. Not all the dawning light of that eternity which shall presently shine around me, can light up all the depth of this mystery—not all the light of that day, when the world burns as a red beacon, shedding a fiery glow far and wide over the great universe, shall shew me all the breadth of this mystery—yea, not all the glory of heaven, which shall shine in concentrated splendour

upon its altar for evermore, shall rise high enough or reach far enough to fill this measureless temple of mystery! The love of Christ is a mystery to all but God, and will be so, I believe, through all eternity. Be not surprised then at Paul's prayer; but, oh, make it your own, say from your heart, "May I know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!"

Can you fathom *its cause*, in the first place? Meditate as long as you will, you will fail to discover it! Search all the writings of all the saints of all ages, and see if they have been more successful; nay, search the inspired volume itself, and that from beginning to end, and you will still find no reply to the great inquiry, "Why did Christ love sinful men?" The cause of the love of Christ "passeth knowledge." Consider a moment.

We know that the Lord Jesus must needs love what is holy, seeing He is Himself the Holy One. Now, had we been holy He might have loved us for that reason. But is that the reason why He loves you, brother? why He loves me? Alas! alas! is a man who is blind with sin, deaf with sin, dumb with sin, crippled with sin, cursed with sin, dying with sin, and

ready to be damned with sin—is such a one holy? Such then are we; and yet He loved us! Oh, why? Christ knew that Paul would be born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and yet He loved Him. Christ knew that he would grow up a proud, self-righteous Pharisee, and yet He loved him. Christ knew that He would help the murderers of His blessed martyr, Stephen, and yet He loved him. Christ knew that he would make havoc of the church, and breathe out threatenings and slaughter against His saints, and drag strong men and helpless women to prison, and all for His name's sake, and yet He loved him. Paul could say of Him, “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

We love others because they love us; love in them to us begets love in us to them. Is this the cause of Christ's love to us? Did He love us because we first loved Him? We are compelled to reverse the language, for Scripture says, “We love Him, because He first loved us.” There is a “because,” and a very sufficient one, for our love to God—but where and what is the “because” of God's love to us. I am not speaking of Christ's general love to all men as their Creator; but of His special love to the

church ; His redeeming love, the love that led Him to give Himself for that Church ; His love to His saints. It cannot be because they are saints that He loves them, for He loved them before they were such, yea, before they were born. And why ? Because He had previously chosen them, says one. Nay, friend ; His love led Him to choose them ; it was not the result of His choice of them, but its cause. But what caused His love ? Ah ! we cannot tell ; perhaps we never shall know. Everything about God is unsearchable. None can measure His strength ; fathom His infinity ; calculate His age ; explain His nature ; or understand His heart.

Again, when did Christ *begin* to love us ? Can you find out the commencement of His affections ? Was it at the cross ? Nay, love brought him there ! Was it at the cradle in Bethlehem ? Nay, love brought Him there, too !

“ Nothing brought Him from above,
Nothing but redeeming love.”

Was it in Eden ? Nay, His delights were with the sons of men before ever the earth was.

The golden vein of Christ's love goes down so deep, that were you to dig into gone-by ages

for ever you could not reach the bottom ! This mighty river of the love of Christ, ere it rolled through our sixty centuries, rose among the hills of heaven, flowing from the deep fountain of the heart of God, having been embosomed there who can tell how long ? As you can never know the beginning of eternity, so you can never know the beginning of the love of Christ, which was from eternity ! It never had a beginning ! for it is written, "I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING love, therefore with cords of loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Shall we be more successful in discovering the greatness of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to sinners ! Never ! for in this, too, it "passeth knowledge." Often in climbing a high mountain, the higher you get the higher the mountain seems to rise. You reach a lofty ridge, and lo, a gigantic stretch of still higher crags looms down upon you. You climb the winding path up the rough side to the top, and lo, the snow-white peaks still soar up above you. You ascend, and stand at last far up in heaven on a higher reach, and lo, the lonely summit still looks down upon you through a rent in its gray veil of clouds !

The love of Christ is magnificent in greatness as a mighty mountain. Climb from Gethsemane to Calvary, and from Calvary to heaven, and it is still above you! And the strongest angel might ascend eternally without reaching its still ever-distant summit.

Settle this down, then, in your mind, saint of God—you never can tell how much Christ loves you. Impress that upon your inmost heart. Oh, think of it day and night. You never can tell how much Christ loves you! Why, even in a devoted mother's heart there are depths of love which it takes all the sorrow, and care, and trial of years to bring to light. And down far in the heart of Christ there are depths of love which His wondrous sorrows have brought up to light, that might have been, but for these, for ever hidden. Who could have told that He so loved us as to be willing to drink the cup of the wrath of God for us, had not Gethsemane revealed it? Who could have told that He so loved us as to be willing to wrap about us His arms, and cover us with His living body, that He might save us from the heavy scourge of God, had not His torture at Pilate's pillar revealed it? Who could have

makes His voice terrible as the sound of thunder. But is that little one affrighted? Love makes His voice tender as the sound of tremulous, unearthly music.

Was ever mother so tender to her first-born child as Jesus is to His little ones? Does He not take them in His arms, and carry them in His bosom? How tenderly he sometimes takes away the soul of a new-born infant from this world of sin and sorrow! How tenderly He stills the little throbbing heart, and hushes the tremulous faint cry, and wipes away the swelling tear, and draws down the half-closed eye-lids, and takes the fluttering spirit to His bosom, and carries it to heaven! Oh, sweet Jesus! It was with the tenderness of love Thou saidst to a widowed, bereaved woman, "Weep not!" It was with the tenderness of love Thou didst weep with Mary and Martha, at the grave where Lazarus was lying in the sleep of death. It was with the tenderness of love Thou didst, at the last supper, draw John to Thy bosom, and say, ere Thy departure, to sorrowing disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled—I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." It was

with that tenderness of love Thou didst, when betrayed in dark and sorrowful Gethsemane, plead for Thy disciples, saying, "Let these go their way." It was with the tenderness of love Thou didst look on poor Peter, who had denied Thee, till the tears filled his eyes, and he went out and wept bitterly. It was with the tenderness of love Thou didst, when dying, commit Thy heart-broken mother to John, saying, "Behold thy mother." And it was with the tenderness of love Thou didst, when hoarse with the thirst and torment of crucifixion, plead with God for Thy very murderers, and cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

And, oh, friends, Christ Himself could not express by His words, prayers, tears, and cries, all the tenderness of His love. No wonder that we should find it inexpressible! And we can never know the immutability of the love of Christ; it never changes. "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Oh, what grandeur there is in such immutable love! What is it like unto? Not to the sea, for that doth smile or frown as sunshine or shadows sweep over it, and doth murmur or

roar as the winds roughen it or roll it into raging billows ; but to a mighty mountain, whose white summit stands far up in heaven. Down below, snows are falling, and then melting ; clouds are brightening, and then darkening ; thunders are sleeping, and then echoing. But above, all is calm, still, the same for ever. Oh, I glory in such immutable love !

It is easy to change the love of man. But nothing can change the love of Christ. Time can change our affection for others into indifference ; but not all the ages of eternity can abate anything of the fervency of Christ's love. Peter, whom Christ called to be an apostle, delivered from death, and saved from hell, who saw Christ walking in power on the waves of Galilee, transfigured in glory on the summit of Tabor, and travailing in sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane, thrice, with oaths and curses, denied his Lord. But did Christ change towards him ? Ah, no ! He prayed for him, and freely forgave him all. We change towards Jesus every day ; our love is always ebbing and flowing ; but His is still the same to us—

“ Though all things change, He changes not,
He ne'er forgets, though oft forgot ;
His love's eternally the same,
And as enduring as His name.”

Nor, lastly, can we ever know the value of the love of Christ. Till we know what Christ is worth Himself, we cannot tell what His love is worth ; but, as sure as heaven is above earth, he that has Christ's love as his own, has all blessings in one. The love of Christ is a sweet cure for every disease of man ;—a deep fountain from which all blessings of grace flow out ; a great treasury, in which all heaven is hid ;—a broad ocean of life, and glory everlasting ! So precious is it, that all the riches of time and eternity cannot purchase it ; yet, so free that the poorest child that ever breathed may have it. So precious is it, that all the pains of poverty, misery, and damnation cannot merit it ; yet, so free that the vilest sinner that ever wept in penitence may receive it. A king of empires, without this love, is poorer than a beggar with it ; and a beggar with it, is richer than an angel without it. Whoever has this love, has everything ; whoever has not this love, has nothing. Surely, its value “ passeth knowledge.” And, remember, you will never know an end to the love of Christ. All things earthly have their end. Death blights the flowers of summer with the breath of autumn, and buries

them in the grave of winter. Death cuts short our few hours of light, and carries us away in darkness ; we have our end. But beyond ! there is no death for those that are Christ's. Heaven is not death ; but is the temple where holiness and joy rest by the river of life everlasting. The love of Jesus is everlasting ! Everlasting ! What ! has it no end ? No end ? No end ? None ! Great God ! this "passeth knowledge." Great God ! Oh, teach me this ; for ever teach me this. Amen.

Christian ! this love is not something that was, and is not. Remember, I beseech you, that it is a living love ; as real and fervent, as deep and mighty this day as ever it was. Oh, believe it ! Delight thyself in it ! Be constrained by it to live to Him who died for thee ; and dwell in it continually, for "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

SERMON XII.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

“ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity.”—1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 13.

As in every collection of valuable paintings there will always be one or two gems which attract the gaze of every visitor and rivet his attention, not only from their extraordinary execution but from the beauty of their subject—so in Scripture there are certain chapters which stand out prominent, even where all is inspired, as more divinely beautiful than all the rest. Such a one is Luke xv.; and such, Isaiah liii.; and such, above all, is the passage descriptive of love in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians ; written to them at a time when, though full of gifts, they were in danger of forgetting the greatest of all graces. In our Bibles the Greek word which means simply

love, and which is so translated in other passages, is rendered "charity." This word, at the time the authorized version was made, had more the force of "love" than it has now. Its conventional use limits it now to one manifestation of love, so that its introduction into this passage has the effect of rather obscuring its meaning. The Welsh and the French Bibles both give it simply as love, and this is its true meaning.

First, by a sevenfold contrast, Paul brings out the superiority of love to all else; and then he shews us sixteen different footprints of love. May the Holy Spirit of God so bless our meditation on this subject, that we may walk in those footprints, and thus, "follow after charity."

He begins by collecting many precious stones and pearls and diamonds, and then bringing forth from the crown of God that jewel that burns with unearthly splendour, and shewing how far this brightest star on His forehead outshines, and out-values all the rest. He says, "Though I had the gifts of tongues;" though I could speak in all the different languages spoken amongst men throughout the world; though I could converse with the Jew in

Hebrew, with the Roman in Latin, with Greeks and Scythians, Parthians and the Elamites in their own tongues ; yea, with all men, of all nations, in all languages—and more—though I could speak with the particular power of particular men in my own language ; though I could reason with all the clearness and accuracy of the logician, and with all the depth of the philosopher ; though I could discourse with the flow and rythm and beauty of the rhetorician, and with all the sweep and power and eloquence of the orator ; yea, though I could speak with the tongues of angels—such wondrous words as I heard fourteen years ago, “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth,” words not lawful for man to utter ; even though I could preach as with the voice of that angel who shall yet descend with the trump of God and call the dead to judgment ; “though I could speak with the tongues of men and angels” ; though I had winning, moving, persuasive, irresistible, overpowering eloquence, angelic, heavenly eloquence ; yet, if I had not one thing, and that a thing made of little account by the world, if I had not love, I am become as—what ?—a rhetorician, linguist,

philosopher, orator, poet, logician, angel, or archangel? Nay, but says Paul, "I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Ah! here is a comparison, brethren! What a laugh of derision is this—"as a tinkling cymbal." What, then, are all these glorious gifts when contrasted with love? Nothing! Less than nothing! Covet, therefore, love; cultivate, prize, and pray for love! Then he says, "Though I had the gift of prophecy;" though these lips of mine, like the lips of Isaiah, were touched with a burning coal from the hallowed altar of God; though I had the power to pour out prophecy in a stream of inspiration; though, with prophetic hand, I could draw back the dark veil which hides futurity and shews mankind glimpses of the bright and beautiful above, and of the dark and terrible beneath; though I could unfold the dread secrets of eternity; "though I had the gift of prophecy;" yea, more, though I understood all mysteries (and oh! what an elevation were this), the mystery of duty, the mystery of incarnation, the multitudes of marvellous mysteries that baffled the highest human wisdom both in nature and revelation; though I understand all these;

though I had all knowledge ; yea, more, though I had all faith, not simply some faith, not faith like a grain of mustard seed, whereby I could remove mountains ; but though I had "all faith," whereby I could work still more stupendous miracles, and have not charity,—“I am—what?—a prophet ! a wise man ! a mighty miracle-worker ! Nay, but I am, says Paul, O most strange assertion ! “I am nothing, nothing, nothing.” Greater than prophet, greater than wise man, greater than miracle-worker, the man whose heart is filled with love.

But hearken again : “Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor ;” why, surely that would be love—charity—would it not ? Alas ! there may be, and there is, much unloving charity ! For love lies not in the act, but in the feeling that underlies and prompts the act ; a man might beggar himself by so-called charity, from pure selfishness ; and without a particle of real love. And though, continues Paul, I give, not only my goods to the poor, but my life to God, “my body to be burned,” as a martyr ; yet, if I have not love, all will profit me nothing.

So, if a man had all Christian graces, all

heavenly gifts, performed all good works, and practiced all self-denial ; if he suffered all painful persecutions, and, at the close, were carried in the flaming chariot of martyrdom to the portals of paradise, if he had not love, heaven's gates would be for ever barred against him ; all—all—all—would profit him nothing. Friends ! if love be thus supremely precious in the sight of God, oh, how does it behove us to seek to attain a large measure of it. Mark, then, and seek to walk in the footprints of love here noted by the apostle.

“ Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ; charity never faileth.”

Surely, the apostle must have been looking unto Jesus, when he sketched this portrait ; for is it not one of the most perfect portraits of Christ we have given us in Scripture ; and it is not a mere miniature—it is a full-length portrait of Christ's character, as it was mani-

fested when He moved among men in the world. I have only to change a word to shew you this. Suppose, instead of "charity," I read the word "Christ;" see if we have not His description. "Christ suffered long and was kind—Christ envied not—Christ vaunted not Himself, and was not puffed up—Christ did not behave Himself unseemly—Christ sought not His own—Christ was not easily provoked—Christ thought no evil—Christ rejoiced not in iniquity—Christ rejoiced in the truth—Christ bore all things—Christ believed all things—Christ hoped all things—Christ endured all things—Christ never failed." Ah! wonder not that this description should be applicable to Christ, for Christ was love concentrated—love exemplified—love manifested; yea, He was love incarnate! I beseech you, in the name of love, to "follow after Christ;" and I beseech you, in the name of Christ, to "follow after love;" and if you follow one you follow both, for love and Christ are one.

Dwell a few moments on these words. First, "Charity suffereth long." Christ suffered long with the coldness of His disciples, with their weakness, with their unbelief, and their hardness of heart. "How long shall I suffer you?" says

Jesus ; “ How long shall I bear with you ? ” Yet, still He suffered them ; still he bore with them ; and still He was also kind to them. Dear brethren, have you been long-suffering ? You may be placed in circumstances of peculiar trial. Are you long-suffering ? Are you kind ? Do you frown at those who frown at you, or scoff at those who scoff at you ? Do you give them what the world calls the cold shoulder, and forget them in your prayers at the throne of God ? Is this like Christ ? Is this love ? Oh, turn round and take a new course. Take coals of the fire of love, and heap them on their heads, and you shall melt down the ice of indifference into the streams of affection. Remember, love is kind.

“ Charity envieth not.” Christ envied not. He was so poor that when they came to demand the tribute money He had to send Peter to the sea-side to fetch it from the mouth of a fish. But did He envy those who rolled in riches along the streets of Jerusalem ? Though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of man had not where—when His hard day’s work was over—to lay His head. Did He envy those who slept in

their palaces in Jerusalem? Ah, no, He envied not. Love never envies. O Christians, envy is a viper that will poison all your happiness. Pluck it out of your bosom, and trample it beneath your feet. Let love lead you to rejoice at the superior success, and prosperity, and advancement of others. "Charity envieth not."—"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." Shall we vaunt ourselves, when Christ never uttered one boastful saying? O saints and sinners! shall Deity be clothed with humility, and dust with pride? God forbid! Pull down thy pride from its pinnacle and bury it—bury it for ever—bury it quick out of sight! The heavenly Jesus humbled Himself, and endured cross after cross, shame after shame, until He bore the shame of shames, and the cross of crosses, being put to death as a vile and guilty malefactor, crucified between two thieves on Calvary. O brethren, He descended from the throne of God, and knelt before a few poor fishermen to wash their very feet! and this, that He might set in a frame of never-equalled glory the loveliest picture of humility ever painted, and exalt it to the everlasting admiration of all earth and heaven. Oh, humble love, let me

walk with thee in the steps of Jesus, who “vaunted not Himself, was not puffed up!”

“Love,” says Paul, “seeketh not her own.” In leaving heaven Christ sought not His own; in all His preachings, and prayings, and watchings, and weepings, and sufferings, He sought our good, and His Father’s glory—“He sought not His own.” And now that He has gone home to God and heaven, He still continues to seek our good; for whether you wake or sleep, eat or drink, labour or rest, live or die, Christ prays—prays—prays—by day and by night, from age to age; and will continue till the last saint is gathered home to God, till the last tears are wiped away from the eyes of the last mourning saint, for “He ever liveth,” not to seek His own, but “to make intercession for those who come unto God by Him.” Oh, the beauty of the love of Christ! What an amazing contrast between our conduct and His! Where shall we see those who are not selfish? Where shall we see those who are self-forgetful? The great moving principle that keeps this world going, whether it be in trade, politics, or religion, is selfishness. There are some who live for nothing but self. Oh, thou that dost rise early and

labour late, simply that thou mayest aggrandise thyself, and collect a little of the dross of this world, and art unmindful of the crown of life held by the angel above thy head, put away thy muckrake ; God has something better to offer thee than the world has. Within thy reach there are riches such as man never dreamed of. But if thou turnest away from heaven's opened gates, the end of these things will be most miserable. If you will live a worm's life, you must die a worm's death. For selfish sinners that go grovelling all their days, are crushed at last under the foot of vengeance. "For the end of these things is death."

The great principle that reigns and rules in heaven, the principle that prompts its praises, instigates all its activities, moves all its holy inmates, glows and burns in every breast, irradiates every countenance, and tunes to sweetest harmony all hearts, is pure unselfish love. If we would anticipate the joys of heaven while yet on earth, we must dwell in love, and, like Christ, seek not our own.

"A sweet but solitary beam,
An emanation from above,
Glimmers o'er life's uncertain scene,
We hail that beam, and call it love.

But fainter than the stars pale ray,
 Beneath the noontide blaze of day,
And lighter than the viewless sand,
 Beneath the wave that sweeps the strand,

Is all of love that man can know,
 All that in angel breasts can glow,
Compared, O Lord of Hosts, with thine,
 Eternal, fathomless, divine !

That love whose flame with quenchless fire,
 Inflames the blest seraphic choir,
Where perfect rapture reigns above,
 And love is all, for Thou art love."

SERMON XIII.

THE NAME OF JESUS.

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."—ACTS III. 6.

"There is a name I love to hear,
I love to speak its worth;
It sounds like music in mine ear,
The sweetest name on earth."

THE day is soon coming when every thing in Heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, shall bow to that name, the name of Jesus, and every tongue confess him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

. Many names were given to our Lord when He trod the earth for three and thirty brief years; some evil by those who hated Him, and some good by those who loved Him. Men's good names are often magnifying glasses, through

which we behold them falsely transfigured ; but Christ's good names are looking-glasses in which we behold him truly reflected ; and though Christ has hundreds of these mirrors round Him they shew us only little glimpses of His glory. Oh ! if the light reflected even from these is stronger than human eyes can bear, what must be the vision of Himself ? Behold Him now reflected in some of the mirrors, yourselves.

Christ is called the second Adam. He is the head of the Redeemed family. Our Angel : He hath brought us messages from heaven. Our Apostle : He hath been sent to preach to us the everlasting gospel. Our Advocate : He pleads our cause with the Great Judge in the inner temple. Our Captain : He leads us on to certain victory. Our Counsellor : He teaches us to understand both good and evil. Our Prophet : He reveals to us the future. Our Priest : He offers our only sacrifice for sins. Our King : He reigneth in love and wisdom over us. Our Redeemer : He saves our souls from destruction. Our Surety : He stands in our room to do and suffer everything for us. Our Lawgiver : He giveth us the commandments of the New Covenant. Our Shepherd : He feeds

and keeps us. Our Servant : He attends us and has humbled Himself, even to wash our feet. Our Forerunner : He has gone on before to prepare heaven for us. Our Mediator : He stands between God and our souls. Our Judge : He shall, before assembled myriads, acquit us of iniquity. Our Husband : He shall marry us to Himself in heaven for ever. But no names yet given Him, have been sufficient to express all His goodness and glory. He is the Alpha and Omega ; the Door and the Way ; the Foundation and the Corner-Stone ; the Root and the Branch ; the Star and the Sun ; the Lamb and the Lion ; the Lily and the Rose ; the Rock and the Shadow ; the Light and the Life ; the Word and the Truth ; the First and the Last :—

“ Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven, His full resemblance bears ;
His beauties you can never trace,
Till you behold Him face to face.”

But of all the names Christ bears, surely the sweetest is the name of Jesus—a name, the sound of which is sweet as the music of angel harpers, and fragrant as the roses of all heaven.

We have an angel's exposition of the meaning of this blessed name. When speaking to Joseph about Mary, before the birth of her holy child,

the angel said, "She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." So Jesus means Saviour, and the name was given to the unborn infant, because His great work was to be the salvation of His people from their sins. O may this name, so pregnant with holy, heavenly, happy meaning, be our comfort and glory for time and for eternity!

Now, let us examine this sweet exposition. He is called Jesus, "for He shall save." · Mark that—He, not they. If I could save myself, Christ would be no more Jesus to me. But, alas! I can go neither forward nor backward. I cannot go back to undo the past and atone for my sins; and I cannot go forward to fulfil the law for the future, and climb over Sinai to heaven. Who can climb that awful Sinai? If you touch it, you are stoned, or thrust through with a dart. Could you clamber over its trembling crags, you would be lost in the blackness above. Could you pass through the smoke, you would be stunned and blinded by the thunderings and lightnings. Or could you endure these, you would sink amid the intolerable blaze of glory, and die in terror. But Christ has

climbed it for us. Up amid the darkness and tempest, and voice of words, and awful threatenings, and smoke of wrath—up to the top, and into heaven; and now, having trod that way for us there is no need that we should tread it for ourselves. No it is finished. He saves us; He fulfilled the law; He bore its curse for those who had broken it; He delivered from the law, and from its doom, from our sins, and from their guilt, and from their penalty. His name is rightly called JESUS, for He saves, and He alone. Can baptism save? Can ordinances save? Away with such childish folly. It is written of none of these things, but of Christ alone, that He shall save His people from their sins.

Some say, faith saves. I tell them, "Faith without works is dead," But they say, Faith, with works, does save. I answer, "By grace we are saved, through faith." The door of faith leads into the tower of Christ. The door does not save, but the tower. Not faith, though faith is the means; but Christ. Some think that taking the Lord's supper can save them; but they only deceive themselves, and dishonor Christ; for what saith the Gospel—"He shall save His people from their sins." He alone.

But whom is this Saviour to deliver ? We read, "His people." A diseased body is a very sorrowful spectacle ; but oh, a diseased soul is a sight most appalling ! Here is a Physician who can cure all pains of the body, and all sin of the soul. Well may He be called Jesus. He saves a mighty multitude of fallen people of every nation and tongue under heaven. But though He saves multitudes, such crowds, such nations, such innumerable myriads, yet He saves none but "His people." They are His ; for they have given themselves to Him for ever. They were His ages ago ; for He bought them with His precious blood—"He gave Himself for us." O, the unutterable sweetness of being His ; of belonging to the Son of God, as His own peculiar treasure. How well governed and guided will they be who are the people of such a King. How tenderly loved, and cherished will she be who is Bride of such a Lord. Christian ! rejoice thou not only in this that thy sins are forgiven, not only in this that thou art saved, but in that that this fact proves thee to be one of His people for ever.

But there is more in this sweet name of Jesus. It means Saviour from sins. Oh, this is a

wonderful thing! When Christ makes a black soul white, He works a greater miracle than if He changed the colour of an Ethiopian's skin. Then is it true, that if I am His, He has taken the stain of sin out of my soul? Is my guilt gone? How can this be? I have sinned? The past cannot be undone. The future will not alter the past. How can my present guilt on account of past sin be removed? How can I be ever looked upon as anything but guilty? What if He made my guilt His own, and bore it for me? But did He? Why, if he did not bear our guilt, what did He bear? Surely, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all;" and thus "by His stripes we are healed!" Oh, lovely name! Jesus! Jesus! There is a heaven of pardon, and purity, and peace in it! and all for the worthless and wicked! Ah! blessed be God, there was One found to wear my black robe, that I might wear His white robe. He takes guilt, and gives righteousness. But mark you; He would not be truly "Jesus," if this were all He did for us. If He covered over my painful wound, and did not heal it, should I be cured? If He forgave me for cutting myself among the tombs, and did

not cast out my "legion," could I sit at His feet in my right mind? Ah, no! He that said to me, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," said also, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." He that took sin's brand of guilt out of my brow, took also sin's yoke of tyranny off my neck, and sweetly whispered, not only, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" but also, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

"Jesus beholds where Satan reigns,
Binding His slaves in heavy chains;
He sets the prisoners free;—and breaks
The iron bondage from our necks."

Nor is this all he does in saving us from our sins. He saves us not only from their guilt and from their power, but from their condemnation also. To forgive a prisoner and break his bonds, and then let him die in prison would be a poor salvation. Christ never serves thus a soul whom He has pardoned. Death is the executioner to whom the law of God hands over those whom it condemns. But O, Christ hands none whom He has pardoned to this executioner, else would His pardon be but vain mockery. But, nay—He slays strong death,—robs the hollow grave,—and quenches the fire of hell. Oh, here is triumph! With my quivering

lips I'll sing His name in death, for death is
dead to me through Jesus Christ.

“ Now, sin is pardon'd, I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside;
The law gives sin its damning power;
But Christ, my ransom, died!”

“ Through death He destroyed him that had
the power of death, and delivered them, who
through fear of death, were all their life time
subject to bondage.”

Oh! what are we dreaming for? Why don't
we break out into praises? Do we believe
this? Is our victory sure? Is it certain?
Then heaven is ours! And more than heaven,
and more than heavens in multitudes countless
as stars—Christ, Christ is ours!—Christ, Christ,
the real Lord Jesus Christ, is ours! ours for
eternity.

This be the victor's name,
Who fought the fight alone,
Triumphant saints no honour claim,
The conquest was His own.
He hell in hell laid low,
Made sin, he sin-o'erthrew,
Bowed to the grave destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew.
I hear the accuser roar,
Of ills that I have done,
I know them well, and thousands more—
Jehovah findeth none.

Sin, guilt, and death press near,
To harass and appal,
Let but my bleeding God appear,
Backward they go and fall.

I meet them face to face,
Through Jesus's conquest blest,
March in the triumph of His grace,
Right onward to my rest.
Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,
Slain in His victory,
Who lived, who died, who lives again,
For thee, His saint, for thee.

SERMON XIV.

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO THE SOUL
THAT SEEKS HIM.

"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."—
JOHN VI. 37.

A PROMISE is precious in proportion to the greatness of the boon promised, and the faithfulness of the promise.

O how priceless, then, a promise of eternal life and blessedness from a God who cannot lie. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," Said Christ, the Son of God. May we who have come to Him in faith and prayer rely then, unwaveringly on being received. Look out on yonder earth ; how firm it seems, and immovable. Look up to yonder heaven ; how great it seems, and everlasting. Yet shall that earth and that heaven pass away ; and Christ's

words abide for evermore. He has promised ; He will perform ; nor shall a single seeking sinner ever be cast out by the faithful Saviour. Here I might stop, for no words of mine can add weight to this great certainty. But I would fain make you feel how certain this is.

Will you answer me some solemn questions ? Why did Christ, a king, in the midst of heaven's glory, become a babe in the midst of earth's misery ? You say, "To save sinners !" Why did He toil, and weep, and preach, and pray, and sorrow for months and years among the worst and most hard-hearted, with hardly any reward but that of contempt, hatred, and persecution ? You say, "To save sinners !" Why did He bow His head in wondrous submission when torn with the pains of deadly agony in Gethsemane ? Why was He silent when led by blaspheming murderers to the place of insult, and crowned as the king of sorrows, with shame and thorns, and misery ? You say, "It was to save sinners ?" Why did He yield His body to be smitten with the hand and rod, and torn with the lacerating scourge, and pierced with the nails and spear ; oh, why ? You say, "It was to save sinners !" Oh, then, if the immortal Jesus has passed

through valleys of deepest humiliation—through shades of darkest misery—through flames of hottest tribulation—and the black waters of death itself—oh, if He hath sighed, and wept, and prayed, and preached, and lived, and laboured, and suffered, and died to save sinners—to save sinners—oh, tell me, will He cast them out when they come to Him?—when they come and say,

“Thy blood can make the vilest clean,
Oh, let that blood avail for me!”

will He say, “Depart, thou guilty sinner?”—will he say, “I will have nothing to do with thee?” Nay, God forbid; He will rather say, “Welcome, O thou poor penitent! welcome to the cross, O thou returning sinner; welcome to thy Saviour, and to life eternal.” Can you doubt any longer? If you do, your doubt makes out Christ to be worse than you yourself are. Would not you receive a poor benighted wanderer, in danger of dying from cold and starvation? And do you think Jesus will refuse to admit you if you seek Him in wretchedness and penitence? But the case is stronger still. You would not turn your weeping child away from your door to die of hunger; and will He turn you away from

His door to die of hunger; and will He turn you away from His door to perish in your sins when you repent and cry for mercy? Yea, the case is still stronger. If you commanded your prodigal child to return, and promised that all should be forgiven and forgotten, and by means of those commands, and invitations, and promises, prevailed with the child, and when he believed you, and came home, refused to admit Him, would you not be both false and cruel? And has not Jesus, O sinner, commanded you to come, and entreated you to come, and promised, "in no wise" to reject you; and do you think He will prove so false and cruel as to break His word and cast you out? Are all your doubts now cleared away? If there is a single dark doubt still hanging over your head, and casting its shadow into your heart, take this thought, and be enlightened and relieved Mark it well: Christ never yet cast out a single sinner truly seeking Him. I solemnly defy any one to point out a single such person rejected by Jesus. The young and the old, the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the educated, the outwardly good, the confessedly bad, scarlet sinners and black sinners—all persons of all

ages, degrees, and nations, who have ever applied to Him during the past nigh two thousand years, have been alike received with compassion and treated with mercy.

Behold Him seated yonder by the wayside ; some women, with their children, try to press through the crowd and come to Him. "What do you want with Him ?" say the disciples ; "to bring your children to Him ? how foolish of you, take them away !" Christ overhears it, and straightway, with look and voice, rebukes them, and says aloud, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not ;" and taking them in His arms, He blesses them—keeping His promise, "I will in no wise cast out."

Again, as He is walking along the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, with a crowd of people, a blind beggar, having found out who it is that passes, cries aloud, "Jesus ! thou Son of David, have mercy on me !" Hush !" say the people, "hold your peace ;" but he only crieth out the louder, "Jesus ! thou Son of David, have mercy on me !" Then Christ hears, stops, and commands him to be brought, asks him what he wants, and when he answers, "Lord ! that I may receive my sight !" He touches at once his

sightless eyeballs, and pours into them light and healing—keeping His promise, “I will in no wise cast out.”

Again, He is sitting at the table of Simon the Pharisee. A poor woman who had been a dreadful sinner, comes behind Him weeping, and stooping down, with the large heavy tears that are falling faster than you can count from her eyes, washes His sacred feet, and then wipes them with her long locks of hair. Simon’s eye is on Him to see how He will act: does He spurn the guilty woman, and crush with despair the heart already broken with sorrow? Ah, no! His soul melts with pity! “Woman!” saith Jesus, “thy sins are forgiven thee! go in peace!”—keeping His promise, “I will in no wise cast out.”

Again, He is nailed to the cross of shame and glory. A wretched thief, hanging over the mouth of hell, turns to Him his dying eyes—his white furrowed face becomes stiffened with a look of intenseness of desire—his dry lips part and quiver, “Lord!” he cries, “remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” Did Christ answer, “I cannot hear you now—I am in pain; besides it is too late—too late?” Oh no! but He

turned upon him a look in which love and sorrow shone together, and said, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise,"—keeping His promise, "I will in no wise cast out."

Come, then, O child of sin, in all thy weakness come to Jesus ; He will take thee in His arms, and bless thee as He received such of old. Come, then, O sightless sinner, in all thy blindness come to Jesus ; He will bid thee pray, and on thine eye-balls pour that light celestial which is "marvellous" in power and glory everlasting. Come, then, O outcast sinner, in all thy misery come to Jesus ; He will suffer thee to kneel beside Him, and wash His feet with tears ; and will pardon all thy guilt, and bid thee go in peace. Come, then, O dying sinner, in all thy hell-deservings come to Jesus ; and He will hear thy groan of anguish, and answer thy prayer of penitence, and wash thy sins away, and carry thee to heaven ; for oh, He hath spoken of old, and hath kept in the past, and will keep till time shall be no more, this precious, ever-precious promise, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

SERMON XV.

THE THREE CROSSES.

I.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."
—LUKE XXIII. 39.

THE history of Jesus' life on earth is from first to last a history of humiliations. Where was He laid when born? In a manger at Bethlehem. Where was He brought up? In a workshop at Nazareth. With whom did He most frequently sit down to eat? With publicans and sinners. With whom did He travel through the land of Judea? With a few illiterate fishermen. Among whom had He most success in preaching the gospel? Among the poor. On every page of His history, whether blotted with tears, dark with sorrow, or crimson with blood, are written those words, "He humbled Himself."

Ah, my brethren ! it was an awful humiliation for Him whose right arm is the right arm of God, to be bound before the judgment-seat of injustice ; but Christ endured greater humiliation than that. It was an awful humiliation for Him whose eye at once surveys all the brightness of heaven in its height and glory, all the breadth of earth and of the universe, to be blindfolded by wretched mortals ; but Christ endured a greater humiliation than that. It was an awful humiliation for Him who at the great day is to judge the wicked, and send them down to dwell with Satan in darkness everlasting, to be condemned at the bar of Pilate, and hurried away to execution ; but Christ endured a greater humiliation than that. It was an awful humiliation for Him who holds the rod of vengeance, to be bound to a pillar by Pilate, and scourged with twisted thongs of leather, until the blood streamed a gory river, from His back ; but Christ endured a greater humiliation than that. It was an awful humiliation for Him who wears the crown of glory in heaven, to be crowned with the thorns of the curse ; but he endured a greater humiliation than that ; for oh, he endured THE CROSS, dying in shame

and sorrow, between two thieves on Calvary ! Oh, my friends, we have too wrong notions of the cross ! In the present day it is emblazoned in gold upon the backs of our Bibles, and worn round the necks of many as an ornament, and stands glittering in the heavens on the spires of churches ; but in old times it was a thing despised and dreaded. Is the gallows held in abhorrence among us ? Much more so was the cross among the Jews. But the Lord Jesus bowed His head to it, despising the shame ; yea, He “ who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,”—for all the host of heaven, earth, and hell, must bow before Him—“ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii. 6-11).

For the present it is to the humiliation of Christ, that we turn our eyes. "As they led Him away they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Ah! there was love and majesty in these words. "Weep not for me," saith Christ; "Your tears do pain me. Weep not for me, for I am above your tears. You think me in the power of mine enemies; but no! twelve legions of angels stand within call. I lay down my life of myself; none take it from me; but if I delivered myself from these, how should the Scriptures be fulfilled? You think that my life has come to a miserable end; I tell you this is but the beginning of brighter things." "Weep not for me," saith Jesus; "but wipe not your tears away—weep on, 'weep for yourselves, and for your children; for, behold, the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the

wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us; for if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If they take me, Christ Jesus, the green tree, whose roots grow by the river of life, whose branches stretch abroad to shelter the world, whose leaves flourish for the healing of the nations, and whose fruits ripen for the life of millions; if they have laid the axe to my roots—if I am cut up and consumed, what shall be done in the dry? What of those who are leafless? What of those who are fruitless? What of those who are lifeless? What shall be done in the dry?"

We read, there were also two other malefactors condemned with Him. If you turn to one of the other evangelists, you will find it is said that both of them railed upon Him. They had left Jerusalem for the last time; and the last time had looked upon its temple, and passed through its gates, and bid farewell to their companions; and were being led away to execution. What were their feelings in that hour? Perhaps they looked round them, turn-

ing their eyes hither and thither, to see if there was any chance of escape ; but there was none. The soldiers were about them on every side—the holes were dug for the crosses—their hours were numbered, and their miserable spirits about to depart from a world of sin they had helped to defile, to a world of woe and torment everlasting. At length they came to Calvary, and we read, “ When they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him.” “ There”—on Calvary—“ they”—the murderers—“ crucified”—nailed to the cross—“ Him”—the Son of God, and the Saviour. There they stripped Him—oh, horrid indignity ! tore from His feet those sandals, once wet with the waves of Galilee, and stained with weary travel—bent Him down on the cross, and drove through His sacred hands and feet the iron nails, and lifted Him up between earth and heaven, a spectacle of love and glory in robes of shame and sorrow ! “ There they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.” Then said Jesus—Father, destroy them ? Nay. Father, consume them ? Nay. But, “ Father, forgive them,” said Jesus. Ah ! wonderful ! wonderful ! wonderful words !

Who can understand such love ! They are my murderers, but oh ! forgive them ; they have pierced my hands and feet, but oh ! forgive them. I came to tell them of Thy love, and they have crucified me, but oh ! forgive them, “for”—and here He pleads for them—“they know not what they do.” Their eyes are blinded, and my glory covered—“they know not what they do.” O sinner ! in rejecting Jesus, you know not what you do ; but God forgive you. “And they parted his raiment, and cast lots,” fulfilling the Scriptures. “And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others ; let Him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ?”

What a dark disclosure have we here of the heart's hatred to holiness. One of the malefactors, after hearing Christ's last words of awful warning, the last He uttered on earth—a prelude to the “Depart ye cursed”—and His tender prayers for His murderers; after gazing upon Him and seeing in His looks the pains of crucifixion and the peace of heaven together!—rails on Him—and tries to pour scalding insult on His bleeding wounds of agony. Oh, earth, earth, why dost thou not quake and swallow us up alive? Why should miserable men, more vile than worms, and venomous than vipers, be suffered any longer to live? Why should that filthy fountain, the human heart, be suffered to issue its black blasphemies in streams of putrid poison any longer? Oh, the forbearance of God! Hearken! “If thou be Christ—Thou sayest Thou art—Thou who dost talk about judgment to come, who askest forgiveness for those who crucify Thee, come down, save Thyself, and us.” Mark that,—“and us.” What says the other? He turns to rebuke him. The mighty power of God's Spirit hath changed him, and is still working in him; and now hear him. Dost, not thou fear God,”

seeing that thou hast broken all His commandments, and are about to stand before Him in judgment? "Dost not thou fear God," seeing that this on whom you rail is His Son? "Dost not thou fear God," seeing thou art doomed to death, "and we indeed are condemned justly, but this man hath done nothing amiss." He here exonerates the Lord Jesus. Oh, how all who have ever known Him, shall join to declare His purity! The centurion cries, "Surely this is the Son of God." Pilate washed his hands from His blood—a dying thief declares "this man hath done nothing amiss;" and Jesus looks round upon His enemies, and says, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Here is comfort for the Christian—Christ was innocent. Therefore the cross He carried was not His own, but thine. Here is teaching for the Christian. You say His hand is sometimes heavy upon you; but remember, Jesus does nothing amiss. Though He was chastened, He did nothing amiss; and though He chastens me; He does nothing amiss. Was He chastened? It was for my good; and does He chasten me? it is for my good—never does He anything amiss! Then turning to Jesus, he said,—Male-

factor? Nay. Blasphemer? Nay. Demoniac? Nay. But, "Lord!" "Lord, remember me," the dying thief, "when thou comest into Thy kingdom." And what did Christ answer? Behold, Christ did not answer the man when he reviled Him—He was silent; but when he cried for mercy, He can be silent no more! O Jesus, Jesus! Thou turnest away silently in sorrow from those who curse Thee; but Thou turnest tenderly in pity towards those who cry to Thee. "Verily, verily, I say unto Thee;" and while the man hangs upon his lips, looking in suspense, he sees love burning in Christ's bloodshot eyes, and catches the words, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The thief speaks no more; for awhile his soul swims in amazement, and then his heart begins to burn with love, and now as he gazes on Jesus, it throbs with tenderness, and fills with sorrowful sympathy—so fast it fills, that it almost breaks—as he hangs in silence, forgetting all but Christ. He sees the unnatural darkness of three hours' length resting on the hill of Calvary; watches His dying struggles with Satan, who labours to overwhelm Him, now in the last hour; but in vain; hears Him cry, "Eli, Eli, lama

sabachthani ?” and with His last breath, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit?” sees the rocks rent, the earth quaking beneath, and the darkness rolled away as a black scroll, and gazes on the still form of the dead ; while angels in shining legions rise with the Saviour’s spirit to heaven. Hark !—“Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in.” Hark ! “Who is this King of glory ?” Hark ! “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle—He is the King of glory.” They enter ; all heaven is moved. And there riseth a song, loud as many waters and mighty thunders, “Worthy the Lamb !” Soon the spirit of the penitent malefactor follows, borne by angels into the presence of Jesus, and Christ meets him, and presents him faultless before God, the very first fruits of that mighty multitude who have been saved by the blood of the Lamb since His death on Calvary. But behold, the other thief is dying ; he breathes out his shuddering soul as the fierce soldier breaks his legs ; no cry for mercy escaped his lips, no promise of pardon and paradise pierced with heavenly light the painful gloom of his last hour.

He had been as near to Christ and to salvation as his fellow ; but he had neglected his great and precious opportunity, and now it was gone for ever. He, too, might have passed away to paradise in spite of his misspent life and miserable death, had he only cast his soul on the Saviour. But he rejected Jesus, and with his latest breath reviled Him, and he will see Him no more, till with all the dead, small and great, he stands before the final judgment throne, and the once crucified seated thereon, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, and to be judged according to his works. O wondrous difference in the eternal destiny of two men, whose character and whose portion in life were so nearly identical. Was one a sinner—so was the other ; was one a blasphemer, even on the cross—so was the other ! What took one to paradise, and left the other to the due reward of his deeds ? Grace, free grace ! Matchless, unmerited grace on God's part, and faith, simple faith, in a crucified Saviour on the part of the dying felon.

O, friends ! it is not for sinners such as we are, to enter paradise as Christ entered it, on the ground of our own righteousness. Were

merit the only road to heaven we might well despair ; but behold a path to paradise which even our sinful feet may tread, a path first trodden by the dying thief, but in which a multitude no man can number, have followed ! Over that path may be inscribed, “ Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,” and they who tread it may do so in full assurance of hope—as they meditate on this blessed illustration of the promise, “ Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”

SERMON XVI.

THE THREE CROSSES.II.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."
—LUKE XXIII. 39.

ON a recent occasion, as you may remember, we were considering the ever memorable scene on Calvary, and dwelling especially on the story of the two thieves, who were there crucified with Christ. Let us now endeavour to learn a few lessons, which are written as in lines of light, on the face of that wonderful history.

As you gaze in imagination on those three crosses, do not those words, "the wages of sin is death," seem to acquire a deeper meaning? Neither the hospital nor the dead-house, the battlefield nor the grave-yard, nothing on this world's surface, nothing in its dark history, presents this awful truth with equal vividness.

"The wages of sin is death;" we may learn it from many passages it is true.

Did Adam eat forbidden fruit in Eden? Adam died. Did the old world, his descendants, sin grievously against God? God swept them away with a flood. Did the inhabitants of Sodom defile earth with abominable impurities? God poured fire upon them. Did Egypt terribly oppress Israel? God drowned them in the Red Sea. Did Israel commit whoredom and idolatry in the wilderness? God slew of them four-and-twenty thousand. Did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebel in the camp? God clave the ground with an earthquake, and swallowed them up. Did the prophets of Jezebel sacrifice to Baal? God slew them by the brook Kishon. Did the armies of Judah forsake the Lord? God slew in one day by the hand of Pekah one hundred and twenty thousand of them. Has generation after generation sinned against the Most High? Generation after generation has been cut down by death. Where are the patriarchs? Where are the priests? Where are the prophets? Where are the apostles? Where are earth's captains and princes, and conquerors and kings? God hath carried them away "as

with a flood in the night, for "the wages of sin is death." But all this is only the death of the body—we cannot see the more awful part of death, the death of the soul. The separation of the undying spirit from the sole source of life and light and joy, from God. This alone is the full wages of sin ; and all those who died were sinners—personally and practically malefactors. But, on Calvary, we see the Saviour who knew no sin—who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—die—and die a double death ; give up the ghost, and exclaim in agony, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ;" thus tasting death in its full and deepest sense. And why ? Because our sins were laid upon Him—the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Oh, if even Jesus could not, when once responsible for sin—though sin not his own, escape, can we fail to see that, as God is true, "the wages of sin is death ?"

And there, too, on Calvary, we see that even as to the saint, the same thing is true, in measure ; even he, though saved, cannot escape the death of the body—though on him the death of the soul hath no power. All the

saints from Abel downwards, saving only Enoch and Elijah, have had to ford the cold Jordan of death, and all who shall follow after must do the same, except the blessed generation who shall be alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, and who shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so—without tasting death—be for ever with him. O man! never, never, I beseech you, think lightly of sin. It cost the Son of God his life. Learn thence that God cannot excuse it, its punishment must be borne, either by the sinner for himself, or by the Saviour for him. Nothing short of death is sin's recompense. Happy are they who can sing with sincerity,—

“ I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God,
He bears them all, and frees us
From sins' tremendous load.”

Another lesson we learn from this solemn scene is, that the unconverted grow worse and worse. Perhaps the lost thief was brought up by pious parents; most likely he was taught to kneel before God by his mother, and was led up to the temple, and heard the sweet music echo among its marble arches, when the worshippers sang God's praises. Often had he

wondered, and perhaps wept, when hearing the history of Joseph, and Samuel, and Daniel. But, alas! he was led away by little and little, adding sin to sin, until sinning became a habit, and habit became confirmed and strengthened, till he walked openly with the ungodly, stood in the way of sinners, and at last sat down in the seat of the scorner; and though rebuked and entreated, he hardened his heart, and stiffened his neck, till suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. You cannot indulge one sin without opening the door for others. The man who begins by walking in the down-hill path of sin, goes on to running, until he falls headlong into destruction. Do you think that Joseph's brethren, when they began a course of unkindness to him, intended to plot murder, to sell him into Egypt, and to keep up for years a lie about his death, bringing their father's grey hairs down with sorrow to the grave? Ah! no, but the unconverted grow worse and worse. Do you think that when Judas first took up his cross and followed Jesus, he intended to steal from the bag, until he became a confirmed thief, and to betray, for thirty pieces of silver, and with a traitorous kiss, the Lord of life and

glory, and then to hang himself, and to go to "his own place?" Ah, no! but the unconverted grow worse and worse.

Alas! conscience can harden and get seared! The skin of a child's hand is so tender that from the softest touch it will shrink; but the skin of the hand of a labourer is harder; and the hoof of a horse is so callous that I may take a red-hot iron and burn it, without giving pain.

Oh, wonderful! There is no standing still; you are either going up to glory, or going down to misery; you are either striving against sin and Satan to enter in at the strait gate of life, or striving against conscience and God to enter in at the broad gate of death. And it is easy work going downwards. Any dead fish can swim with the stream, but it wants a living fish to swim against it. It takes a hard struggle to breast the stream of temptation, and the rush of tribulation, and get clear out beyond into the still waters of peace. It is my duty to warn you, and I do it. Hearken. Some of you, unless you are soon converted, may be led on to do things you would now shudder at—things which prove the doer to be

reckless of both conscience and character. I solemnly command you to consider your ways—in the name of God I do it. For oh! you cannot stand still, no, not for an hour; and, until your sins are forgiven, you only become worse and worse.

Learn, too, from Calvary, that there are none too bad to be forgiven. Behold one whose life was a history of iniquity; and whose heart was the dwelling-place of all evils; caught by the hand of Christ, just as he is dropping into the pit, and carried by the angels of God straight to paradise! Why is such a case recorded in Scripture; and why is only one such recorded? One, that none may despair—only one, that none may presume.

Art thou a great sinner? Look at the crucified thief, and take heart; call thou on the Lord as he called, and thou, too, shalt be saved. Hast thou, in thy heart, if not openly, disbelieved Him, and blasphemed His name? Still look at this penitent blasphemer—fear not! Jesus can save, even such! Whoever you are, Christ can save you! Come, cry to Him, for none are too bad to be forgiven!

Learn, too, from Calvary, that when a sinner is saved, it is by faith in Jesus. How can I prove to you the faith of the penitent thief? By his wonderful prayer. Some have said his faith is the most wonderful that stands on record. He turns to the poor, despised, persecuted, forsaken, marred, insulted, wounded, stripped, mocked, scourged, hated, crucified, dying Jesus, and calls Him "Lord," and speaks of "His kingdom," and cries, "Remember me." Oh, strong faith! thine eye can behold glory where others see but shame; and while others grovel, as on angel wings thou canst rise to heaven. And mark you how Christ answered that prayer. "Lord, remember me," prays the thief. "Verily, thou shalt be with me," answers Christ. "When Thou comest," says the thief. "To-day," says Christ. "Into Thy kingdom," says the thief. "In paradise," answers Christ.

Had that thief the New Testament? No. Had that thief the preaching of the gospel? No. Had that thief the plan of salvation spread before him? No. And yet he believed. How much more, friend, shall we believe? We who have seen the crucified ascend again to the heaven whence He came; we who have seen

His name worshipped to the ends of the earth, and His faith overthrow idolatries and empires. Oh how much more reason have we from the depths of our hearts to call Him Lord ! He heard Christ pray for His murderers, and His heart was won to trust Him ; but we have seen those very murderers saved by thousands at Pentecost, and persecutors like Paul pardoned. Oh what reason have we to trust and not be afraid of Jesus Christ ! Shall the dying thief, with his little knowledge, have great faith, and we, with our great knowledge, little faith ?

May God forbid ! Let him not rise up against us at the judgment, and say even at the darkest hour, when He was forsaken by God and man, I saw enough in Jesus of Nazareth to convince me that He was God, and that God was love, and I cast myself on His mercy accordingly ; while you, when eighteen centuries have proved Him God, and proved Him a loving Saviour, refused to trust Him, and failed to call upon His name.

O, friends ! learn, I beseech you, at Calvary, how simple a thing is conversion to God, and how sublime and immediate and eternal its results. "Lord, remember me : " "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

SERMON XVII.

GOSPEL BLESSINGS, FULL
AND FREE.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

ST. JOHN VII. 37.

THE nourishment for our souls, of which we are invited to partake in the Gospel, although purely spiritual in its nature, is very frequently described as if it were material, and lay within the province of our senses. Our Lord Himself, when He describes the blessings which it was the object of His mission into the world to secure for His followers, has recourse generally to this method. His simple-minded hearers could not have comprehended the sublime truths of the Gospel, if stated abstractly ; but they could

rise to something like a conception of them, when clothed, so to speak, in the flesh and blood of a material body. It is only when truth is so presented, that the mind can seize and apply it, that any really good result can be expected to follow. The intellect may be gratified, the admiration excited, the understanding enlightened, with displays of learning, the subtilties of reasoning, or the flowers of rhetoric ; but none of these is the end at which religion professes to aim. Its grand object is to impart peace to the soul, and holiness to the life—to implant in the bosom hopes which stretch far beyond the boundary line of time, and to dispel those fears, which the thought of death and future retribution, never fails to awaken in the unrenewed heart. But the attainment of this end, evidently implies a personal and practical appreciation of the truth. To secure this, our blessed Lord embodied the loftiest truths in the simplest imagery ; and thus the most illiterate of His hearers were in a position to profit by His teaching.

Standing forth amid the congregated thousands of Israel, as they crowded the spacious courts of their magnificent temple, during the celebra-

tion of a great national festival, He made the proclamation, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

"Come unto Me, and drink," are the words of the gracious invitation, which the Saviour personally addressed to the Jews, nearly two thousand ago—an invitation which His servants, in His name, are authorised to repeat, any day and every day.

Frequently, in the various parts of Scripture, are the blessings of redemption set forth under the appropriate and expressive image of water. Thus, Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Hear the Saviour, too, when talking with the woman of Samaria, as they stood by Jacob's well, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." The same figure frequently occurs throughout that book which closes the volume of inspiration. It is, indeed, the last figure which the Spirit employs, ere the words of prophecy are sealed, and the oracles of God completed.

“The Spirit and the bride say, come ; and let him that heareth say, come ; and let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The water to which Jesus here invites us, is an expression for all the blessings and privileges and joys of the covenant of grace ; all the benefits which His obedience, His passion, and His death procured ; and which it is the duty of His servants to press on the acceptance of all. Dead in trespasses and sins, the water of life revivifies and endows with a new spiritual life ; weary and toilworn with the disappointments and sorrows of the vale of tears, this water refreshes, strengthens, and cheers ; filthy and polluted with the defilements of sin, this water purifies, and beautifies, and sanctifies. The springs to which we are invited, are the wells of salvation ; and the water which is drawn therefrom is a medicine that cures every disease of the soul, and imparts vitality and vigour to the drooping and desponding spirit. This is a fountain, ever full, and ever flowing—open, and easy of access ; not like Siloam, whose healing virtue was available only when its waters were troubled. In Christ, there is

offered to the sinner, without money and without price, all that is needful for the health and healing of the soul ; all that is requisite for cleansing his filthy and polluted garments, and arraigning him in the robes of holiness ; the purchase-money of his emancipation from the thralldom of sin, and the title deeds of an incorruptible inheritance. To Him the believer is invited to come, for the supply of every want, as he prosecutes his journey onwards and upwards, to the city of the saints. Jesus is to him a very present help in every day of trouble. Does he need strength to overcome temptation, and to put down the risings of sin in his heart? Then, draughts of the water of life will nerve him for the conflict, and crown him with victory. Is he distressed by doubts and fears, and forebodings of evil? Then, if he drink of the life-giving water, it will drown his fears, dispel his doubts, and completely dissipate all his forebodings. Whatever be his wants, or his wishes, or his discouragements—whatever he has to depress his spirits, or damp his zeal, or make his faith to waver—whatever obscures his spiritual vision, drags him down to the earth, and hinders his communion with his Father, and his

God—for each and all of these there is a ready remedy in Christ. Thus, then, the sinner whatever be the enormity of his sins—though they be crimson and scarlet sins—may find in Christ that which he specially needs. The believer, too, has in the same Saviour, his all-sufficient help, his ever-present and never-failing friend.

Let me now mention one or two of the avenues by which the wells of salvation may be approached.

The first I would notice is the Word of God. This word read and preached, is a well-trodden path, leading to the streams of pure delight. What, I ask, is the great object of salvation, if it be not to lead sinners to the Saviour? Whenever the Bible is turned to any other purpose than this, its sacred character is traduced, and it is made to serve a worldly or selfish end, instead of its one, only, heavenly design. It was given to man for the express purpose of making him wise unto salvation; and to him who does not see this to be its object, it can be no better than a dead letter, a sealed book, or a cunningly devised fable. To the man, however, who takes it into his hand as Heaven's guide-book to the solution of the great prob-

lem of humanity—a problem, namely, how the Deity is to be reconciled and heaven attained—it is a boon inestimably precious. He feels that it is the only safe guide to follow, as he threads his way through the tortuous windings of this world's labyrinth. The man who goes to the Word of God with the single aim of being led to a knowledge of that truth in which is salvation, will find it everywhere pointing, as by a finger post, to Calvary, and to Him who was there bruised for the world's iniquity. He will perceive that in Old Testament times, the sacrifices and types of the shadowy dispensation, which then was, all pointed to the cross, and from it derived their significance. To whatever point he turns he finds the Bible faithful to its great aim ; ever teaching that pardon and peace are to be obtained only through mediation.

Again, the word preached is nothing but an attempt to impress the same truth of salvation, through a crucified Redeemer, on the hearts and consciences of sinners, and to persuade them to be reconciled to God. The preacher's object ought to be to set before his hearers the doctrines and attractions of the cross ; and to invite them to the wells of salvation, and

the water of life, rather than to the streams of human wisdom. It ought, too, to be the hearer's object, in listening to the preached word, to be led thereby, to place his confidence, and his hopes, more and more in the efficacy of Christ's finished work, and to receive the spiritual nourishment, which will increase the growth of grace in his soul. Is it, my friends, with such a desire—a desire, namely, of having a more realising experience of the mercy of God in Christ, that you read the Bible, and listen to the proclamation of its truth? If there are any of you who are actuated by other motives, in doing the one thing or the other, let me simply ask such—Is there any other name, than that of Jesus, by which we can be saved? Is there any other balm than that of Gilead, which can heal your wounded soul? Is there anything else than the water of life, that can quench the longing thirst of your soul?

Prayer is another of the avenues, leading to the stream of living waters. None of those who draw water out of the wells of salvation, are ever far from this road. Oftentimes, in sadness and sorrow, they go up by it; and yet are privileged to come back rejoicing. Prayer,

indeed, in the spirit of it, is a declaration that all our well-springs are in God. In this holy exercise, the Christian soul feels that it is invigorated, and emboldened, and comforted, from day to day. The throne of grace is to it, a place of peaceful waters—a hallowed retreat, in every season, both of joy and sorrow; the bright centre, whence all sanctifying and saving influences radiate. Do you, my brethren, take advantage of this means of obtaining supplies of heavenly grace and strength? Does a consciousness of your spiritual wants bring you to your knees; and do you then feel, as if there were imparted to you, something of a divine energy—an energy, which the powers of darkness cannot repress? For the devout suppliant wields a power, which renders impotent all the wiles of the devil, and the result is, that

“Satan trembles when he sees,
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

A third avenue to the well-spring of life, is the Holy Communion. When we take into our hands the consecrated memorials of redeeming love, the water of life wells forth in cooling and refreshing streams, which flow into our souls, diffusing a holy joy, a delightful sweet-

ness, and a soothing peace. On this mount of Christian ordinances the eye of faith beholds the glorified Redeemer spreading out before the weary pilgrim all manner of fruit gathered from the garden of grace. At this great Gospel feast, the blessings of Christ's purchase are visibly set forth and partaken of, through significant emblems. Here, coming to Christ, and drinking of the water of life, are signified by outward acts. In this commemorative rite, we behold our blessed Redeemer, bleeding and agonising and dying, in order to procure those blessings which are offered to us so fully and graciously and freely. He bled that our sentence of condemnation might be obliterated. He was crucified that the mouth of the pit might be shut against us, and the gates of the heavenly paradise thrown open to receive us. And, oh, He is calling on us now, in the tender accents of compassionate love, not to turn away from His mercy, but to come to Him, and He will be to us as the dew unto Israel, and as springs of water unto the thirsty ground. Let all, then, who would spend eternity in the city of God, come to this ordinance as frequently as an opportunity for doing

so presents itself, to be made partakers of the promised blessings ; for it is the very gate of heaven, the vestibule of that temple, where are heard the anthems of the redeemed, and the ceaseless hallelujahs of the heavenly hosts.

Let me now notice, ere I close, the one only qualification, which must be possessed by those who would drink of the water which flows from that spiritual rock—which is Christ.

They are such as thirst ; which simply means, that there must be a consciousness of the need of those blessings which the Gospel promises to bestow. It must be a thirst for the kind of water which is to be found in the wells of salvation, else it is no qualification for coming to Christ. There are many kinds of thirst, which it were folly to imagine coming to Christ would allay. There is, for example, a thirst of ambition, a thirst for pleasure, or honour, or wealth ; but there is nothing in the religion of Jesus that can quench a thirst such as any of these, at least in the sense of bestowing the desired object. But if a man thirst for the pardon of his sins ; for the joy and peace of believing ; for holiness of heart and life ; for communion with God and fitness for

heaven, to Christ let him come, and drink abundantly of the water which He will give him. Let a man but thirst for any spiritual good, or desire deliverance from any spiritual evil, and that is the man to whom Christ addresses the invitation, "Come unto Me, and drink." Let a man but honestly and earnestly desire to close with God's offered mercy, on God's own condition, and that is the man who is warranted to take the cup of salvation, to call upon the name of the Lord, and to pay his vows in the presence of God's people.

"Poor, sinful, thirsty, fainting souls,
Are freely welcome here ;
Salvation, like a river rolls,
Abundant, free, and clear."

SERMON XVIII.

THE LAND OF LIGHT.

"There shall be no night there."—REV. XXIII. 5.

THE glimpses which we obtain of the heavenly world, from the highest eminences of revelation, are of such a character as to brighten and animate our hopes as we encounter the dangers and surmount the difficulties that lie between us and our home. All these views, doubtless, are merely pictorial; unlike that which the great Hebrew lawgiver obtained from the top of Pisgah, when he literally beheld the mountains, and plains, and rivers of the promised land. Our vision, so long as we are in this state of mortality, could not bear the dazzling brightness of the land promised to Abraham's spiritual seed—a land which has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it;

for the glory of the Lord lightens it ; and the Lamb is the light thereof." That brightness requires to be greatly softened, before the weak eyes of mortality can so look upon it, as to give any palpable idea of its outlines, and the nature of the happiness to be enjoyed there. But in consideration of this, God has, in His word, condescended to communicate what He has deemed it meet to reveal of heaven in the shape of pictures, which speak to us through our senses and our experience. It is to meet our weak capacities too, that heaven is so frequently represented negatively to us. In our present state there is much to harass and distress us. It is quite natural, therefore, that, in forming an idea of happiness, our thoughts should at once turn to the destruction or removal of whatever destroys our happiness here. In every case the removal of a present evil comes before the bestowal of a positive good, in the production of happiness. Hence it is, I conceive, that the negative descriptions God has given us of heaven, come more home to us than the others. They tell us that in the state of future blessedness, there are none of those things which so frequently embitter human life

on earth. Sin, sorrow, suffering, pain, disease, death, ignorance, fear, anguish, are all unknown there.

I shall now proceed to illustrate the text, which is one of those negative descriptions of heaven; and may God so illuminate us by the light of His truth here, that we may be prepared for dwelling in the eternal sunshine of His presence hereafter.

The man of reflecting mind will scarcely fail to see, that the stillness and darkness of night are as necessary to the well-being of the animal and vegetable economy of the world as the bright and cheering sunbeam, and the activity of this work-a-day life. It is, therefore, a most wise and beneficial thing that God, by the operation of a simple, natural, law, produces the regular alternations of day and night. When the sable mantle is drawn over the earth, there is a general signal given for man to cease from his labour, refresh his wearied frame, and unbend his overstrained mental energies, by surrendering himself to the balmy influences of sleep. How welcome, then, do the shades of evening become to the hard-working sons of toil? What a blessing is it accounted by the

man who has day after day to labour and sweat, for the support of himself and his family, when the sun goes down, and the evening star heralds the approach of night? Night indeed is God's immediate gift to the poor man, during which, while he forgets his toils and cares, his body is refreshed and invigorated for resuming with renewed strength that labour by which he earns his daily bread. Oh, blessed season when the poor and oppressed obtain a kind of foretaste of that freedom which shall take them for ever from under the yoke of the oppressor!

But when night is put to an unnatural use, that is, when it is employed to exhaust rather than recruit the worn out energies of body and mind, it is not to be wondered at, that a load of infirmities has to be borne, and that a wasted body comes to be laid in an early grave. I am not now referring to such as give their nights to vicious indulgence, but to such as bring infirmity upon themselves, by depriving their bodies of the necessary rest for which nature has made provision. This may be caused by an anxiety to acquire knowledge, or to rise in the social scale—things laudable in themselves—but to be deprecated when purchased at too

high a price. Nature most significantly indicates that the night should be given to rest, and nothing is more inconsistent with the welfare either of our bodies or of our minds, than to withhold from them their needed repose.

But when this mortal shall have put on immortality, its energies shall never become exhausted—never need to be recruited. The employments of heaven will be found neither wearing nor wearisome. The glorified bodies of believers shall need nothing corresponding to sleep; nor shall their energies be impaired by the unceasing occupation of an endless eternity. In heaven, accordingly, there shall be no night, there being nothing there corresponding to the end it principally subserves here—no wearied bodies longing for rest; no jaded minds requiring relaxation.

Nor is it only that night is not needed in heaven, inasmuch as it can have no end to serve there; but besides this, none of those things which night symbolises play any part in the economy of the heavenly kingdom. The three principal things which night is taken, metaphorically, to represent, are—ignorance, affliction, death; and these are unknown in the mansions of light and life.

In the present state, our knowledge is not only limited in its extent, but imperfect in itself; and bounded on every side by the dark clouds of ignorance. Although science has made some majestic strides, and knowledge has gained much ground, even within the memory of living men, there has not been any sensible diminution of the illimitable extent of our ignorance. Any addition made to the little that we know, is apt to bulk so largely in our estimation, that we are kept from thinking how much we are ignorant of. If you take a few drops from a river, or from the ocean, you do not sensibly diminish the one or the other, though what you take be quite appreciable. Now, all that any of us can know, is but as a drop from the boundless ocean of our ignorance. To study the extent of our ignorance, alike regarding the commonest things, and the most abstruse subjects, is the best way of checking the risings of intellectual pride, or any tendency to over-estimate the extent of our knowledge. Such, indeed, is our present ignorance, that the whole period of our probation on earth has been fitly denominated a night; in contradistinction to which the future existence of the saints is called a

day. When night throws his veil over the face of things, the traveller sees nothing of the objects of beauty around him. He may be passing through the most beautiful scenes, but he might almost as well be traversing a desert ; strain his eyes as he will, nature and her beauties, art and its monuments, are for the most part hidden from his view. Just so is it with us. For what do we know here of those things, even which it most concerns us to know ? The Saviour's beauty and His glory ; the excellency of an infinite God—His ways, His workings, and His purposes. We speak of these things, but what do we really know of them ? Oh, it is but a small part of God's works—the work of redemption not excepted—that we can know here ; only something like what the traveller sees at midnight of the wide-spreading plain on his right hand, or of the mountain that towers above him on the left. The world, indeed, is a night to us, not—blessed be God—a night of total darkness. The stars do sometimes shine above us, and flashes of heavenly light now and then cross our path ; but at best it is night with us still ; and often do we long for the shadows to flee away, and the darkness to be gone. This

green, flowery, rock-built earth, the trees, mountains, rivers, and far-sounding oceans, that great deep sea of azure that swims over head; the wind sweeping through it, the black cloud fashioning itself together—now pouring out fire, now hail and rain; what is it? Aye, what? At bottom we do not yet know. We give a name to the fire which issues from the dark thunder-cloud, and by artificial means we produce something like it—something akin to it. But what is it? What made it? Whence comes it? Whither goes it? Science has no adequate answer to give. Verily, science with all its boasted achievements is but as a superficial film, floating on the vast ocean of our ignorance. So circumscribed and imperfect is all our knowledge, that the scriptural expression, “We know only in part,” is applicable, in its widest sense, to our present state. But in heaven no cloud of ignorance shall rest on the immortal mind. The mysteries of providence and redemption shall then be solved, and the deep arcana of nature fully revealed. As a symbol of ignorance, therefore, there shall be no night in heaven.

Again, there shall be no night of affliction there. Trouble, under all its myriad forms, is the fruit which the tree of sin bears. But that tree can never grow within the paradise of God above. Satan once planted it in the earthly Eden; but both he and sin, his nursling, are for ever excluded from the heavenly paradise. Even though he disguise himself as an angel of light, he shall never succeed in gaining admission within the sacred precincts of the city of God.

It is unnecessary that I should speak of the toil and trouble—the sorrow and sadness and suffering; the anguish, bitterness, and bereavement incident to humanity in this vale of tears. Universal experience amply testifies that there have been bitter ingredients in every cup; and that all have had to pass through the night of sorrow. But in the better land, there shall be nothing of all this. The dwellers there shall not say they are sick; nor shall the bitter tear of sorrow bedim any eye. There there shall be no bodily pain; no mental anguish; no dark hiding of Jehovah's countenance; no interposing cloud of doubts and fears; but all bright and joyous and happy—the mind unclouded,

and the soul filled with heavenly light and joy.

Finally, there shall be no night of death there. Death is appropriately called night. It puts an end to the labours of life, and lays those to whom it brings its summons, down in the still and peaceful grave, there to rest until the dawn of the resurrection morn. But from heaven the pale horse and his rider are excluded. No shadow of death shall ever cross the path of those who have entered on the enjoyment of immortality. This world is but a vast graveyard, and living men move only for a little time up and down the streets of the city of dead. But in that land of which I am speaking there are no graves ; there is no spot within its sacred boundaries which death claims as his. There is no decay—no symbol of death to be found there. Light and life and love reign supreme in yonder blessed city ; darkness and death shall find its gates for ever barred against their admission.

But if there is no night, there must, of necessity, be a never-ending day. Day ! The very word is suggestive of much that is pleasing ; and yet all the pleasant images which it calls

forth are but dim and imperfect shadows of what is to be realised in heaven. There the Sun of Righteousness shines in unclouded splendour. Now, this day, the apostle tells us, is near. The night of our probation in the world is far spent, the day is at hand. We have only, as it were, a step to take, and we are in that world where there is no night, but a cloudless perpetual day. What effect, then, should the knowledge of this have upon us here, and now? It should certainly lead us to inquire, if we are in the way of being prepared for being ushered into the glorious brightness of that land where there is everlasting sunshine. If you ask me, in what the preparation for dwelling there consists? The apostle answers the question, when he says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Now the works of darkness are just the works of sin—evil dispositions, and evil practices—works to which we are prompted by the prince of darkness, and which are congenial to his nature, and favour the interests of his kingdom. If we would be prepared for the light of heaven, we must get rid of these. We cannot fall into a greater mistake, than that of

thinking we can be clothed in the graces of Christ's spirit, while we are holding fast any beloved sin. We are to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and then to run with patience the race that is set before us. Oh, that the Spirit of God would teach us the necessity of cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit—the necessity of casting off and renouncing everything which the light of His word shows to be a work of darkness.

But we have more to do than this; we have also to put on the armour of light, that is, to adorn ourselves with all the beauties of holiness—all the graces of the Holy Spirit, that we may be prepared for that heaven of holiness, where there shall be no night of sin. We are, brethren, on the confines of the eternal world. The rolling years have brought us almost within sight of it. It is surely, then, our interest and our wisdom to be dying daily unto sin and living unto holiness—to be daily putting off the deeds of darkness and putting on the garments of light. To enable us to do this, let us seek the regenerating, controlling, and heart-purifying influence of the grace of Christ. Nay,

more, let us seek to have Christ Himself formed in each of us the hope of glory. By having Him dwelling in us we shall be transformed into the image of His holiness, and thus be prepared for dwelling for ever in the bright sunshine of His presence, in that city of which He is the everlasting light, and on which no shadow of death shall ever rest.

O, sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect !
O, sweet and blessed country,
That eager hearts expect !

Jesus, in mercy bring us,
To that dear land of rest ;
Who art, with God the Father,
And Spirit, ever blest.

SERMON XIX.

FAITH IN CHRIST.

'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

JOHN IV. 46.

THERE is a verse in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews which should never be lost sight of by the reader of the Gospel narrative.

He was not the man of a particular time ; whose acts were to be confined to a particular time ; whose teaching was to apply to a particular time, dealing with its particular fashions, teaching its particular creeds. He is for all time. His teaching is being uttered through all time : needing in no way to be changed to suit modern ways. The Gospel story is no biography of the departed : it is a history of the living.

Thus, the same kinds of things He did eighteen hundred years ago, He has gone on doing ever

since. The bodily cures He wrought, as selections are made in the narrative from their endless list, and particulars given, are pictures, specimen cases of such cures wrought in sinful souls under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit ; and, indeed, we may fearlessly add, on bodies too. More especially on bodies healed through the quiet restfulness which results in the first instance from the healing of the soul ! So that nothing of the many things that Jesus did should be thought of as merely a thing of the past ; as the deed of a good man, serving its purpose and done with ; its story graphic and beautiful, but its interest, slight, since its application is over.

There is not a miracle He wrought, but in some manner, different perhaps from the original manner, yet still as real. It may be wrought ; it is being wrought now. There is not a syllable He uttered when He did those blessed deeds of love, but He had His eye on every time, on every soul, on our time, on us, intending to teach us. It is this inextinguishable life of the Gospel story that gives it its worth. Its cures are reports fresh from the side of the sick bed ; its battles and victories are fresh dispatches from the

field. No telegram brings us later news than does the quiet record of the evangelist. Missing this truth, we miss everything. Open the Gospels as a tale of days gone by ; of deeds confined to men, long since dead ; scenes long since vanished, and they lose their crowning value. So graceful, indeed, is the story ; so simple its dignity ; so exquisite its pathos ; so instructive its moral, that you cannot help being arrested. You must be dense and dull, indeed, if you do not lay down the book to think, and call up faded memories of crowds round a fisher's boat ; or on "the green grass ;" or round the mountain, listening to the great sermon ; but there the influence ends. You have got no further than any well written-book of travel or adventure would take you. But take up the Gospels in another spirit. Search into their story, with its Hero standing by your side ; His eyes fixed upon you ; His very hand upon your shoulders. Read there, not about Jesus who was, but Jesus who is ; and He will look forth to you, and speak to you, helpfully, tenderly, from every page. You will walk with Him along the Emmaus path of the sweet story, and He will open to you its meaning. He will

show you, not what He was who died ; but what He is who lives. The acts of mercy written there will reproduce themselves in your own experience. What you read will be a scene, in which Christ and yourself are the principal actors. The Gospels will have for you that rich value that never yet belonged to the written life, however admirable, of one whose acquaintance you never formed ; whose face you never saw ; that preciousness peculiar to the history of a dear, personal, living friend.

Let us illustrate all that has been said by the particular case recorded in this passage of St. John.

There was a certain nobleman, whose son was at the point of death. Of course, every remedy had been tried, and tried in vain. The boy's life was dispaired of. At this terrible crisis, the father hears that a remarkable person who had recently wrought a strange wonder at a marriage feast in Cana, had returned to the neighbourhood. He resolved to see Him, and seek His help. "The man is close at hand," he argued, "who did the one deed ; it is no harder ; it can be no harder to Him to do this other." Here he uses the Gospel story, just as we

have been urged to use it, in what has already been said. There were two facts before him, on which he acted. The one—that a man called Jesus had wrought a superhuman wonder ; the other—that He was still alive, and close at hand. And these are the two facts which we have to go upon.

He loses no time. He felt there was no time to lose. He hastens to Cana, where Jesus was. Doubtless, he looked upon Him as a man of great power. Possibly, as a prophet who was to bring back the age of miracles, and break the long silence since the days of Malachi. But he did not regard Him as Almighty God. It would have been marvellous if he did. He entreats Him with passionate eagerness ; with the imperiousness of great need ; urging its claim in the one hopeful quarter left to it ; and gets for answer, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

Did our Lord mean, that all the man wanted was to get a proof from Him of His power ; that he might settle whether He was the Christ ? Certainly not. The nobleman had only one anxiety in his mind—to get his boy healed ; with the pretensions of the Healer he had

nothing to do. But he did not understand our Lord's reply to his appeal. He seems to think it is cruel. He alters his tone and style. He was a nobleman, with power and place; and his pride is in arms; he is not to be set aside with a meaningless answer, by the carpenter's son. "Sir, come down, ere my child die." They were the last words he uttered in unbelief. They might have been called the dying words of his old self. A mighty change is at hand. But those words are very stout; the nature fights well before it expires. "Sir, come down;" I command you! By every law of our common humanity, he conceived himself to have a claim upon this mysterious Person. Here was a man, he argued, gifted with marvellous powers for the good of others; if He hesitate, He must be compelled to exercise them.

Alas! all this is but a repetition of the previous error. Now, our Lord turns round, and in answer to his clamorous words, looks him full in the face—a fixed look—a look so full of strength and meaning; so unlike any earthly look, that the suppliant quails before it. In the moment's awful silence it pierces him

through and through. Then, very slowly, very solemnly, came out the utterly unexpected words, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." And he had left him at the point of death, and no one had been near him since! Is this credible? That searching eye, as he meets it, settles the question. A revolution has been effected within him. Obediently, reverently, thankfully, he goes on his way. He had come to bring the man of skill—of matchless skill, to his boy's bedside; he had come determined, on this point, to take no refusal. He would not leave this Jesus, whoever He might be, till he had brought Him safely to where his son was lying. "The sign and wonder" he was bent on seeing, was that of the august Healer; healing, by some magic touch, the darling of his heart. And he was told to return—to return to the desolate room, without help or hope, save what lay in that strange assertion, so contrary to all evidence of his senses, "Thy son liveth." He simply obeyed, and whenever, as he was going down, a doubt would cross his mind, suggesting that his journey had been fruitless, he would expel it; doubtless, by recalling that look, and those words of power.

To apply all this, there are many whom the Gospel has touched ; but who have not embraced it. And they have not embraced it, because they question their right to do so. They dare not say for themselves, "Thy soul liveth." Yet they have set out as the nobleman set out ; wanting life, as he wanted it ; seeking it, as he sought it. But they have not seen a sign or wonder ; they will not believe. Nor would Thomas ; and for the same reason ; and Jesus told him he was wrong. It is a mistake to require anything beyond the invitation and the promise. "Remember Thy word unto Thy servant, on which Thou hast caused me to hope." Nothing more.

Is there any one present who knows there is deep joy, deep peace to be found in believing—receiving the Gospel ; but knows nothing more ; knows not how that joy and peace may become his or hers. They flow from a sense of forgiveness, and this flows from taking Christ at his word. Sir, come down, ere my soul die, is often the prayer ; and we wait, and wait, and wait, for Him to come down. But before the prayer had left our lips, He replied, "Go thy way, thy soul liveth." What ! With no evidence of our senses to confirm this ?

With none. You kneel down at the feet of the Great Healer, in desperate extremity ; you rise, feeling, it may be, no better ; but having His plain word to go upon, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Are the words real ? Then they are all you need.

Faith has its opening struggles, for sense has no help to offer. You feel nothing to encourage you. But though you feel nothing, Jesus says everything ; and that is enough. And so, from Cana to Capernaum, you journey on—you journey home—assured that what He said so unexpectedly, and what you believed so implicitly, though nature contradicted it, is the simple blessed truth, "Thy soul liveth." And in this truth is—believe it, seriously believe it—perfect peace !

SERMON XX.

THE CHIEF CONDITION OF
SALVATION.

“ Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.”

MATTHEW XV. 28.

“ THE just shall live by faith.” This is one of the chief conditions of man’s salvation. Faith is not the meritorious cause, but the prescribed condition, on our part, of our acceptance with God ; whatever may be our views on the external evidences of religion. We differ broadly in respect to the ritual, and we may differ in respect to some of the doctrines of religion ; but Scripture teaches us that all our notions must be reduced to this simple principle—“The just shall live by faith.” The faith of God’s people is the same in every age, and under every dispensation of the world. It is the faith once given to the saints ; not one kind of faith

under one dispensation, and another kind of faith under another dispensation. No; one faith as well as one Lord, and one baptism. The apostle positively insists upon this fact, in that beautiful eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There he introduces instances of faith, from the creation of the world to the advent of Christ, and then comes the conclusion, "And these all having obtained a good report, through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect;" shewing that the faith of those who live under the present dispensation of the Gospel, must partake of the same nature and efficacy as that of those who lived under former dispensations: "That they, without us, should not be made perfect."

The question may be asked, "What is faith?" Well, it is a firm belief in the truth of the testimony respecting a past fact, and a firm belief in the reality of a promise respecting a future good.

Now this is the sole sum and substance of the faith of the Gospel. You believe the testimony supplied in the Gospel of the fact of human redemption through the Lord Jesus

Christ, and you believe in the promises given in the Gospel of the future benefits to be realised through Him. But let me tell you, there is something more than a bare belief in those realities; there is also confidence that the fact is adapted to your case, and that the promises are applicable to your wants. We are furnished with an instance of this in the example of the woman of Canaan, to whom our text refers; she believed the fact of our Saviour's ability to grant her request, and she entertained confidence in his willingness to supply her wants. The whole circumstance suggests to us one great principle, which is the conquering power of a true faith. "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." Christ admired it, and it conquered. Let me now introduce a few reasons why this woman's faith conquered, and shew that our faith may conquer, for the same reasons.

I. It was exercised on the right object. She might previously have tried various remedies for the cure of her daughter, and, perhaps, like the woman having an issue of blood, had spent all her living upon physicians. She became now convinced that Christ was the only Physician

that could give her the necessary relief ; she came ; she saw ; she conquered. Faith, to be efficacious, must invariably come to, and rely upon the proper object. What disasters have occurred in the world by believing in false representations, and trusting in false objects. In David's time, some trusted in chariots, and some in horses ; therefore, they were brought down and fallen. Goliath of Gath came to the battle with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield ; and relying upon these, he was vanquished by the stripling David, who came in the name of the Lord of Hosts. As it was then, so it is now. The man is diseased, he has no confidence in the judgment and prescription of a real physician ; he believes in nostrums of his own ; he resorts to various quackeries ; he aggravates the disease ; and ultimately he dies. The speculator believes in the puffs of advertisements, and thinks that he is going to make a fortune at one stroke. He invests in a scheme the bulk of his capital ; at length he finds that the whole is a bubble—it bursts—he and his family are reduced to ruin.

In things spiritual, people no less place confidence in false representations. They resort to

reason; they resort to outward forms; they depend upon external show, or trust to their own righteousness, as did the Pharisees of old. Why should it be wondered at, if they are disappointed and perish at last? If this Bible be true, Christ is the only safe object in whom to trust; all others are tinsel—empty fountains without water; deceptive phantoms in the wilderness; a sandy foundation, that must give way when the pressure of death and eternity comes to bear upon the soul, leaving it without consolation, without a friend, without hope.

II. This woman's faith arose from a feeling of her own utter helplessness and want. She came to the strong for aid, when her own strength had totally failed her. What could she do? It was the time of her extremity; her daughter was "grevously vexed with a devil." Her necessity was great; she had done her utmost, but to no avail. Her resources were now exhausted, and her only chance was to go to Him who cured all manner of diseases amongst the people. It is when we feel helpless in ourselves that we come to Christ for aid. The buoyant swimmer who can breast the waves, feeling confident that he can reach the

shore in safety over the surface of a placid sea, despises the rope that may be thrown out to him ; but the drowning man, sinking under the threatening surges of an angry flood, grasps at the only means which may be offered for his rescue. When the prophet felt his danger through his own, and the peoples iniquity, he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone." The thousands on the day of Pentecost were sensible of their desolate condition, when they asked ; "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The jailor of Phillippi felt that he was in danger of being lost, when he exclaimed, "What shall I do to be saved?" Thus you and I must feel that we are hopelessly lost in ourselves before we come to Christ the Saviour. When we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in Him.

III. This woman's faith caused her to persevere under difficulties. Our Saviour put on a forbidding aspect, and seemed determined to reject her suit under any circumstance. He first treated her with apparent contempt, and regarded her with that indifference which is most mortifying to a sensitive mind. Her prayer was offered in a most humble and earnest manner, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou

Son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." "But he answered her not a word." So contrary to any precedent in his conduct towards the distressed ! Even before they cried, He was wont to hear. A person of ordinary faith would at once conclude—either he is not that gracious and compassionate person as report represents him, or my case is so peculiar and desperate that I am beneath his notice ; why should I wait upon him any longer ? Surely he does not intend to answer my request. She did not argue thus ; she was confident of his power and willingness to save ; she persevered, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David." Even the disciples, who were less sympathizing than their Master, felt for her in her distress, and pleaded, "Send her away ; for she crieth after us." But, he replies, she is not within the pale of my mission, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;" she is a Gentile, and a "stranger to the commonwealth of Israel ;" how can I extend my favours to one of an alien race ? This repulse, one might have thought, would have been sufficient to daunt her courage, and drive her to despair ; but no ; it brought her

still nearer to Christ, it increased her earnestness in prosecuting her petition. The disciples were, indeed, silenced by the reply, but she was not. "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me." She improved in prayer. Instead of blaming Christ, or charging him with unkindness, she seems rather to suspect herself, and lay the fault upon herself. She fears lest, that in her first address she had not been sufficiently humble and reverent, and, therefore, she came now and worshipped him, and with greater earnestness, cries, "Lord, help me." But her trial was not yet at an end; things go from bad to worse; the cloud becomes darker and darker; to discouragement is added insult. Not only was she placed amongst the rejected gentiles, but classified with the dogs, as those gentiles were regarded by the Jews at the time. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." The Jews are the children of the kingdom, and the table is spread for them; what right have the gentiles who hold merely the position of dogs to expect to partake of the children's bread. This was a home stroke that must shake the strongest confidence; but instead of relinquishing her hold,

she seemed to gain strength under the infliction of every blow : " Truth, Lord ; " I acknowledge the aptness of the similitude ; still the dogs are not allowed to starve ; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. If I am a dog, thou art my master. I ask not but for the crumb—the smallest of thy favours which the children reject and despise." Now this woman did not argue the question whether she was of the house of Isrsel, or whether she belonged to the accursed race of Canaan ; it was sufficient for her to know that she was in the presence of one who could help her. She came to him as the " Son of David"—the promised Messiah, and thus an all-sufficient Saviour for a poor helpless sinner. She came to him as she was, burdened with want and pressed with sorrow, and she would not let him go until he blessed her. Such perseverance could but succeed ; her faith conquered to the full extent of her requirements. " O woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

It is by such persevering faith that we also shall conquer. If we feel our misery and deep necessities as the woman of Canaan felt them, we shall imitate her in humility, in reverence,

in earnestness, in perseverance. We also must expect our difficulties, our oppositions, our trials. Our heavenly Father may often delay His answers to our prayers ; our case may sometimes appear desperate ; our personal or domestic afflictions, our doubts, our fears, our sorrows may weigh heavily upon us ; we may be

“ * * * Tossed about,
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without ;”

but perseverance conquers all. These things are all for the trial of our faith, which is much more precious than gold that perisheth. Let us not vainly try to argue the point whether we are amongst the elect, or of the house of Israel ; but let us “ have faith in God.” That faith which can confide implicitly, wait patiently, pray fervently, and persevere unwaveringly will ultimately conquer. Faith honours Christ, and Christ will honour faith. He will assuredly, in the end, say also unto us, “ O woman,” or “ O man, great is thy faith, be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.”

SERMON XXI.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

“Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart : prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well, if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”—PSALM CXXXIX. 23, 24.

PROBABLY we may be tempted to think that if it were possible for us to have some thoroughly perfect friend continually present with us, to check us whenever we were about to do amiss, we should most frequently restrain ourselves from what is wrong. That is to say, if we feel that we have any kind of desire to avoid evil. We cannot but fancy that the kind warning, and the severe rebuke would have good effect. We feel sure that we should often very gladly avail ourselves of the guidance and assistance. Probably we should do so for a

time, and in a degree ; but it is not at all likely that we should do so throughout our lives. Serious consideration will lead us to believe that we should certainly not do so. We might start fair, and promise well ; but our good behaviour, depending upon such a check, would not be lasting. For have we not, in truth, such a friend, ever ready to warn us ? “ O Lord, Thou hast searched us out, and known us ; Thou knowest our down-sitting, and our uprising ; Thou understandest our thoughts long before ; Thou art about our path, and about our bed, and spiest out all our ways.” And surely no human friend can be to us that which is the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity : “ Our Father which is in heaven,” loving us with love “ that passeth all understanding ; ” our Redeemer, who gave up His life for us, to teach us how to live and die, and to purchase for us life eternal ; our Comforter, to “ guide us into all truth.” God Himself is this friend—ever able, ever willing to prevent and further us ; to try, and prove, and examine us ; and to “ look well if there be any way of wickedness in us, and to lead us in the way everlasting.” And which of us will say that

we behave as in the continual presence of One who thus "noteth down in His book" all our thoughts, and words, and works? How often do we behave as people who have no one to whom they must give account, no one to please but themselves?

And whence is it that Christians can dare behave thus? It is to be feared that there is but one answer. Christians, not seldom, do not heartily believe in such a God as Him with whom we have to do. For who, that heartily believes in God, would not seek to please Him, and fear to offend Him? Who that heartily believed in heaven and hell, would not earnestly strive to gain the one and avoid the other? Who that heartily believed of this life, that it is a state of trial for another beyond the grave, would live as if this world were to last for ever?

If the Christian heartily believed that the Christian's God is "a God at hand, as well as a God afar off;" that "neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and open unto His eyes;" that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he

bath done, whether it be good or bad ;” that the unrighteous “shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.” If the Christian heartily believed these and such like matters of the Christian faith which he professes, very surely his Christian practice would be more in accordance with his Christian profession.

But, indeed, too often do Christian people seem as if they would fain make themselves disbelieve, rather than believe. If good thoughts come into their hearts, they drive them away from themselves ; if they feel anything like a fear about the state of their souls, they stifle all such feelings ; if they have any kind of faint resolution to improve, they put off the day of improvement, until it never comes. From all which it is too sadly clear that they do not feel in their hearts the realities of the Christian faith.

Now, the real servant of God knows that he is as certainly in the very presence of the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity—the presence of God—as we are in the presence of each other at this moment. He most fully expects to see God face to face hereafter, as here he sees his

fellow-men face to face. And he lives as in that presence. The awfulness of that presence "encompasseth him on every side"; encompasseth all that he is and all that he has. It unfolds him and his, as the expanse of the heavens stretches over and embraces within its bosom, the earth and all that therein is. Calm and steady light clothes all around him—none other than the light of God's countenance—"and nothing is hid from the heat thereof." Truly it is a peace which the world cannot give; a peace which the world knoweth not. In his difficulties, God "guideth him with His eye;" in his dangers, "the Lord of Hosts is with him, the God of Jacob is his refuge;" in his temptations, "though he fall, he shall not be cast away, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand"; in his poverty, "the Lord will provide"; in pain of body, "the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; "Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness;" on the bed of death, "though he walketh through the valley of the shadow of death, he will fear no evil, for Thou art with him; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort him;" in the world unseen, "Thou shalt show him the path of life; in Thy

presence is the fulness of joy; and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." From first to last, in life and in death, in time and in eternity, it is the presence of God which is the Christian's "shield and exceeding great reward."

Accordingly, the Christian's life is a life of daily preparation for death, a constant getting ready to stand before the open presence of the Lord. Such has it ever been with the saints of God. They "walked with God." In the earlier ages of the world it pleased Him to reveal Himself to them by angels, and by voices from heaven, by visions, by signs, and by wonders. "Last of all He sent His Son," also, to live in the flesh among men, to set before them the pattern of their lives, and to die for them on the Cross, and rise again, and "ascend to their Father, and His Father." Yet, all along, the presence of God was the solace and joy of the saints, by hope and faith in the Old Testament, by fulness of hope and faith in the New.

The service of God was their work, and their delight. They rose in the morning fresh braced and nerved for His service. They went to their rest weary with, but not weary of their work.

They worked for God and laboured for eternity. No work was to them worthy of the name of work which was not intended for God's service. Day by day they followed His guidance in the way everlasting; and they "dwelt under the defence of the Most High, and abode under the shadow of the Almighty." They "dwelt" under it, "abode" under it; ran not in to shelter, when the sun 'smote, or the tempest raged, and then departed; made not the defence of the Most High, and the shadow of the Almighty, a resting place, "as a wayfaring man, that turneth aside to tarry for a night, in the darkness of sorrow or fear; but dwelt and abode therein, saying, "This shall be my rest for ever." Of such was the Psalmist. "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Of such must be ourselves. The knowledge that God is ever present, should lead us to look upon Him, as He is to all who diligently seek Him, as a friend ever at hand, to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct, to try us, and search, and prove, and examine us, and lead us from "the way of wickedness" into "the way everlasting."

But as "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure," so must we "will and do," when He has worked in us, as He has done, and continues to do in all Christians, unless in the apostate who has utterly cast Him off, and quenched the Spirit. If, therefore, we use the words of the Psalmist, and pray, "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me; examine me; lead me;"—we must act as we pray. That is, if we say, "Try me, O God," we must try our own selves; bring our own selves up to trial before our own selves; we must not pray to God to "seek the ground of our heart," to seek the ground, the very bottom of our heart, and then scarce lay open the thin surface at the top, instead of looking well if there be any way of wickedness in us. If we say, "Examine me," we must examine ourselves; and we must not expect God to "lead us in the way everlasting," while we continue in any way of wickedness.

This is the great argument and encouragement we have for setting about this work and carrying it on. It were a hopeless task to undertake it without this, if left to ourselves; but because

there is one who knows us better than we know ourselves, and who searches and tries us, therefore we can search ourselves—we can listen to His voice—and attend to His hand, when He works in us to discover what is really in our hearts. Neither let us “try” our neighbours, and not ourselves ; and “seek the ground of their heart,” while we never explore the dark chambers of our own. Let us “prove our own work,” before we prove the work of another ; and “examine ourselves,” or ever we summon others to the bar of our censure. Let us beware how we mark the career of others in any “evil way,” while we do not look well if there be any way of wickedness in us ;” and be careful how, with pretended or mistaken zeal to do God service, we would lash and goad others into the path of duty, while ourselves refuse to let our God “lead us in the way everlasting.” Good for us if, as the proverb, in its better sense, says, “each can take care of one.” Happy he who “knows himself.”

And, indeed, our whole lives must be a self-examination ; a bringing of ourselves into God’s immediate presence ; a sitting in judgment on ourselves, in the searching light of His countenance.

What must be the state of that Christian's soul who never knows what it is to withdraw from the noise and excitement of the world, and standing in the presence of God, ask himself seriously some such questions as these: How have I spent my time? What sins have I fallen into? What duties have I performed? What mercies have I received? What thankfulness have I shown to God for them? How have I prayed? How have I studied God's Word? How have I received the sacrament of Christ's body and blood? Am I prepared to die? Some such questions as these ought we to put to ourselves daily, as ever we would wish to live and die well. And let us be very sure, that whether we choose to judge ourselves now or not, there will be no choice as to whether we will be judged of God. Now, "whilst we are in the way with Him," let us "agree with Him;" make up our reckonings, and pray Him to "set our accounts right before Him, and pardon all our mis-spendings and misreckonings." Pray we Him now in this world to try us, and seek the ground of our heart to prove us, and examine our thoughts. Pray we Him now to look well if there be any way

of wickedness in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.

“To lead us in the way everlasting.” “To lead us.” Not to drive us. Not to drag us. To lead us. To lead us by the calm influence of the ordinances of His holy church ; by the deep teaching of His Holy Word ; by the soothing blessedness of the prayers of His church ; by its life-giving sacraments ; by the daily rules and routine of the Christian’s path to heaven. To lead us, by pointing out the foot-marks of the “Man of Sorrows,” traced on everything along the church’s solemn road. To lead us, also, by the every-day occurrences which come across our week-day road ; lead us to see His overruling hand in the most common-place, events ; lead us to see His Providence in the “falling to the ground of a sparrow,” and the overthrow of armies ; in the clothing of the grass of the field,” and the glorious apparel of princes ; in the ordinary “noonday sickness,” and in the mysterious “pestilence that walketh in darkness.” Pray we Him to lead us, not by sudden fits and bursts of enthusiasm, but by a settled, sober, orderly walk with God ; by our turning all things to account ; trying and searching out

them, and our own hearts ; and examining and comparing ourselves with all which is passing around us ; by inquiring whether we are allowing ourselves to be led "in any way of wickedness," or "in the way everlasting."

"In the way everlasting"—for there is surely nothing everlasting but the life to come. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world ; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. The way of riches is not a way everlasting, "for we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." The way of pleasure is not a way everlasting, for "woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep." The way of this world's friendship is not a way everlasting, for "no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him." The way of honour is not a way everlasting, for "many who are first shall be last." Heaven and hell are everlasting. God's kingdom and the kingdom of the Evil One are everlasting. The "torment of pleasure" and the agonies of the

damned are everlasting. Everlasting will be the remembrance that the "gain of a whole world" is nothing, if the gainer "lose himself, or be cast away;" and everlasting the remembrance that in God's "presence is the fulness of joy and at His right hand there is pleasure for evermore." The way of the godly—what else but that shall endure when all things have come to their end; when all of worldly life lives on in everlasting death? There is but one way everlasting for the faithful Christian, and that is "the way." "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

• SERMON XXII.

THE FALL OF PETER.

"I know not the man."—MATT. XXVI. 74.

PETER was the first of the apostles. His very name was given him by our Lord, to indicate the firmness of that foundation upon which the church should rest. He was the first called of the apostles. He was always ready to assert his faith. His vessel was chosen by Jesus from which to preach the Word to the people. He, in the end, by his death of no ordinary nature, delivered his testimony even more faithfully than any other apostle. Yet Peter, not doubting Thomas—Peter, not backward Philip—the warm-hearted, enthusiastic Peter, committed the base act of denying his Master. He from whom we should have expected most in the hour of trial, performed the least. The rock, apparently so firm, fell, crashing over, at the first blast of the gale.

First.—I wish to point out to you that Peter's temptation was very great. Of course, it would be easy for a preacher to make capital out of the greatness of the sin by contrasting the kindness and favour shewn by our Lord to Peter, and his return of black ingratitude, by dwelling on the peculiar meanness of the denial, "I know Him not;" by urging the ease with which he could have escaped the commission of the crime, for was it not well nigh sought out by Peter, by noticing the cowardice of the desertion, at a time when help and sympathy were most needed. I do not however propose to dwell so much upon these points as upon the greatness of the trial to Peter's faith. He had looked for other things than the justice-hall, the felon's death. In the days when, like Simeon, he was waiting for the consolation of Israel, Jesus had called him, and inspired him with great hopes as well as great faith. "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Did Peter understand these words all at once, or was there not in them at first a meaning for him, which was not the true meaning? Did they not seem to say to Him, "Follow Me, Peter, and thou shalt be My instrument for

raising Israel from her bondage ; follow Me, and thou shalt be My right hand in the great and glorious victory." Then, as time past on, Peter, it seems to me, would look at each fresh miracle as an earnest, perhaps the prelude, of His glory and assertion of power. He sees Jesus gliding towards him over the surface of the water ; he recognises only the Lord, and with a warm impulse flies to meet Him ; lacking all qualities but that one—not calculating how small his faith is. And so again, when he sees his beloved Master surrounded by the myrmidons of the law, who so forward as Peter ? He is ready to fight ; he draws his sword ; he attacks one of the enemies, trusting that now, at last, things are brought to an issue ; that now, at last, Christ will call down the legions of angels to aid the holy cause. Still full of hope, Peter follows his friend to the judgment ; follows to see Him declare Himself ; to hear with his own ears the enemy confounded. He goes to witness the assertion of the kingdom of God ; he perceives only the triumph of the kingdom of the devil. He goes to see the Christ acknowledged ; he perceives only the carpenter's son—Jesus of Nazareth, insulted. He

goes to witness, perhaps to assist at, the grandest scene which could be enacted on earth; he perceives only the lowest act which ever blackened humanity.

Oh, what a fearful revulsion of feeling must have taken place then within the breast of Peter! With what yearning must he have longed for the end of the trial and the temptation! With what agony of suspense must he have watched and waited! He who looked for the sublime, could see nothing but the commonplace; and so he said, "I know not the man;" and having said it once, no wonder that he repeated it again, and yet again! He began to doubt, and doubt came upon him like an avalanche; then followed the sign agreed upon—the cock crew—His Master turns eyes, not of hesitation, hardly even of reproach, upon him. Then first, perhaps, comes upon Peter a glimmering of the truth. The untrue, the false, has not been without, but within; he has been expecting that which could not be. Those legions of angels, that assertion of earthly power, were false; he reads it all in his Master's eyes. It is patience, suffering, obedience which are to conquer the world. Oh, what a mistake he has

made! It is, indeed, time to go out and weep bitterly.

Who does not know by his own experience that this is a common history of human temptation? When hope is strong, and faith active, we think of ourselves as being always full of faith, abounding in strength; but seasons come, when for various reasons, we are faint and weary, and fall an easy prey to temptation. It may be that our frame is weakened by some unforeseen cause; it may be that our strength, even at its best, is not so great as we fancied it would be. For who knows the temper of his sword, until he has tried it against the armour of the enemy? Who knows the strength of the foe's arm, until he has warded off, or received in his bosom, the point of his lance. Often our bodies, which are the chief instruments of temptation, are miserably weak, and at the moment of victory, desert us for the enemy's standard. Too much or too little food, or coin, or clothing, make us different men; but most of all, as in Peter's case, the temptation, when it comes, is so very different from what we expected. Had Peter been called upon to lay down his life in the good cause, he

would have died cheerfully, with his face to the foe. It was the meanness, the lowness of being called the felon's friend which unmanned him. A hero's death he would have hailed with delight; he shrunk back, a pale coward, from scorn, and irony, and laughter. We think of the sin as coming upon us in its horror and loathsomeness; it comes in reality, covered with glitter and beauty. On the Sunday morning, when our thoughts have been turned towards heavenly things, and we have been brought near to God, and evil and temptation and sin seem to be things with which we have nothing to do; for sin is loathsome now, and evil is black now, and temptation is weak now, we see it all in its right colours. Then comes the week-day temptation, the chance in business, the opportunity of enriching ourselves, the lower passions roused. Then, oh, how weak are we! how strong is the tempter! We, like Peter, have in our better moments firmly resolved to uphold the right, even though it cost us our life; we are sure that we shall have strength for the struggle; by one noble deed we will gain our Master's approval. But, lo, when the time of trial comes

this thing is not required of us. We are to endure, for a weary lifetime, a crushing burden of sorrow; we are to give up all hopes of prosperity here; we are to suffer, not to do—then the spirit rebels. We had not looked for this; we hurl a puny defiance at our Maker, and live without God in the world.

Let us now go back to the narrative, and see what was the position of Peter with regard to the temptation. In St. Luke's Gospel it is recorded that our Lord said to Peter, "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." From this we see that Peter was handed over to Satan for trial or temptation. In the Book of Job we have a description of Satan wandering to and fro on the face of the earth, and the influence which he is allowed to have for a time over men. It does not at all matter whether the Book of Job is an allegory or not. If it is, it does not at all interfere with the argument. We see that God hands over Job to Satan, to be tempted. So, also, was Peter sought for by Satan, and more than sought for, he was obtained. God granted Satan power for a time over Peter. This may seem a very old-fashioned belief. Who would believe in the devil as he is painted

in pictures in these days of material progress and general knowledge? I venture, however, to declare that the belief in a real personal devil, is that which carries fewer difficulties with it than any other theory. The biblical account of such a spirit of evil as Satan, explains, does not create difficulties. It is the origin and existence of evil which is really so hard to understand. The thought, "Why does not God kill the devil," occurs to the man of education as well as to the savage. But seeing that God in His own good wisdom does allow evil to exist, seeing that if one thing is certain in this world, it is the existence of evil; the reality and the personality of Satan explains much that were otherwise obscure, and is far more satisfactory than any other theory which I have ever met with.

I think, dear brethren, that you will gain strength for the combat, by believing that God sometimes hands you over to Satan, to be tried and sifted like wheat, as He once did Job and Peter. Try to realise that you are placed in this world with responsibilities upon you, that you have a fight to fight, against a real personal enemy; that there is one at your right hand ever ready to present a sin to you, and

that in its most specious form. Believe that it is not a matter of little importance whether you commit a certain sin or not ; but rather that your enemy, however small the sin be, will look upon it as a triumph if you fall ; and that angels, and all the hosts of heaven are ready to raise a shout of joy if you resist.

Peter committed what, at first, appeared to be a very little sin. It did no one any harm ; yet we do not see it now in that light. So with all sin. In the future, especially in the immediate future, sins look very small. In the past, at least after we have begun to repent them, they look very large and terrible. This is Satan's trick ; he knows well how to employ it.

When we begin to repent sins, then are they indeed terrible ! Oh, what a bitter thing it is, brethren, for the Christian man to look upon his sins ! It is well-nigh intolerable for one whose life has not been wholly sinful and thoughtless ; who has striven to live the Christian life ; to have to look back upon so many fresh sins ; and sometimes there is one deeper and blacker than the rest staring him in the face. Aye, it is intolerable, it is past human endurance ! I who have professed so much, learned so much, I have yielded ; I who thought

myself so firm ; I who was so firm, have fallen into Satan's arms. The thought is too terrible for human endurance !

Still, a light seems to come to me out of the darkness. If the thought is so intolerable, is not that a proof that I hate the sin ? Am I not safer now, sinner as I am, hating the sin, than when I sinned and was happy ? Is not that hatred of sin called repentance, and repentance that which leads me to the feet of Jesus, who shall save me from my sins ?

Peter's life was changed after his fall. Perhaps God allowed him to fall, that He might raise him higher than ever. Oh, blessed sin which has caused me to know my Saviour's love ! And for the future—is there to be more sin ? Oh, no ! Else should we fall into that first state of sinfulness and carelessness and happiness. You and I, brethren, who have fallen into sin, never mind how often, we must gird up our loins in earnest, and remember that God is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able ; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.

May God grant that we all may thus bear temptation, for Jesus Christ's sake.

SERMON XXIII

SONSHIP TO GOD AND THE
POWER OF PAIN.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

1 JOHN III. 1.

How are we to approach God? Are we to avoid His presence? Or are we to think of being with Him as the greatest happiness that we can enjoy? Are we to think of Him as an angry God, who turns His face away from us, and has no tenderness and love for us? Or are we to think of Him as a loving Father, who is grieved, indeed, with us, because we are not what He would wish us to be; but, nevertheless, desires to draw us to Himself?

My sermon to day has for its object to answer these questions, as clearly as it may be given to me to do.

Do not let us ever venture to think of God, or God's doings, in any other way than in a perfectly simple and natural way. We have no right to use any other standard in estimating God, than that standard which He has Himself given us. We must not make use of other rules in estimating Him and His works than those which we use every day to estimate common things. Great and clever astronomers have calculated to a nicety the weight of the earth, and, I believe, even of the sun; but they have not employed any other scale than that which is used in every-day life. If God had meant us to deal with Him and His character in any other way, He would have taught us how to do so. But He has not; love, and justice, and mercy, and truth are the same all the universe over. God's justice, God's love, God's mercy, God's truth are the same as ours. The only difference is, that His are infinitely greater than ours, although they are of the same kind. We have, for instance, only got a slight glimpse of the meaning of justice;

whilst God's justice is complete and perfect. I am sure that I am to aim at God's justice, by trying to make human justice perfect. I cannot think of a justice different to that of which the seeds are planted in my own conscience. If I ascribe acts to God, and call them just acts, which I should call unjust if I tried to do them myself, I should be doing Him dishonour, not honour. Divine justice is the same as human justice, only infinitely purer and better.

Nor is this to be wondered at, when we consider that God made man in His own image, after His own likeness. The image has been distorted and the likeness blurred, by something evil; that evil is sin. We have, by nature, that is, from God, pure and sinless souls; our powers, our consciences, our conceptions of good and evil are naturally like God's. It is not I who say this, but Scripture, remember. And with this beautiful disposition of ours, which is capable, as Jesus Christ has shewn, of perfect purity, we have inherited the malady of sin, which has disfigured it and made it very unlike what it once was. Now is it possible to suppose that God hates what He has made in His own likeness and after His own image? I think not.

It is not in accordance with the natural instinct of justice which I find in my mind, to suppose that the mind of God should be filled with hatred and merciless anger against me, whom He created and endowed with a nature, once pure, and still capable of goodness. Of course, He hates my sins, but He does not hate me. We must have a very clear conception of the great difference between the sinner and the sin. I have already shewn, I think, that God does not hate man ; but He certainly does hate sin. And hating sin, I mean that God is in direct antagonism to sin, that, although He allows it to exist, there is no compromise possible between Him and sin. He cannot overlook it. He never fails to see it when it exists. He does not ignore a small sin, because it is small. Sin is sin to Him. He does not endure sin in His immediate presence.

And now the question very naturally arises, How far is the sinner identified with sin ? Does not God, perhaps, hate the sinner because of the sins which he has committed ? I answer that sin does, indeed, keep the sinner out of God's presence ; both in this world and the next. Nay, more than this, the wilful, unrepenting

sinner does make himself one with his sins and does draw down the active wrath of God upon himself. But the repentant sinner, however weak he may be, is in a very different position. God has provided a remedy for the malady which afflicts him in Christ. By Christ's work—I need not stop to describe its operation now—a man's sins are put away from him, so that his sins are as far off from him as the poles of the heaven are from one another. A voice from within me tells me that I have received from God a god-like nature, judging rightly between the true and the false; and I am glad and my heart is lifted up towards my Father in heaven. But the voice speaks again and convicts me of my sin and tells me of the evil which is in me; I am cast down, and despair of ever being present with my Father, until I learn the way back to His presence which Christ teaches me. When I have humbly learned this lesson, I know that in Christ, the Elder Brother of the human race, who has taken my sins away from me, I am more than ever entitled to be called a son of God.

Here then is the answer to the question with which I began,—How are we to approach God?

We are to draw near to Him, who is our Father, with the feelings which those should have who are privileged to be called sons of God. We have a double title to His love. He made us, giving us a part in His own likeness ; and then when we had lost that likeness, or much of it, and with it the sense of His Presence and Fatherhood. He sent His Christ to bring us back to Him, and make His existence real to us again. What great wonders are worked in us ? Twice are we made the sons of God—by creation, and by adoption. Shall we allow sin always to mar the work of creation ? Shall we allow want of faith always to mar the work of adoption ? No ! Let us rather take up our inheritance—our sonship with God. Let us learn from Jesus how to hate the sin which disfigures our once god-like nature. Let us kneel at His feet, let us clasp His cross, let us take Him by faith, unto our hearts ; let us, resting on His bosom, feel ourselves raised above the world, because we are resting on the bosom of God.

After a vision, after a moment of exaltation like this, it is hard to have to face such a difficulty as the existence of evil. We are apt to say, sometimes, that God would have shewn

His love to us better if he had never allowed evils, such as sin and pain, to come into existence. The history of mankind in its earliest stage, justifies, I think, such a view. Adam and Eve would have been happier in the garden of Eden if they had never sinned. And if they had remained pure we should never have known sin. It is foolish for us to say anything in the way of approval of their fall. They would have been better if they had not fallen, and we should have been better, too. Why, then, did not God shape our future in that good way, rather than in this evil one?

Is this an evil way? It is not so good as the way of the angels of God's sinless creatures; but still, it is a good way. The evil and the sin and the pain from which we are all suffering in this world are only temporary, and they are doing a work for us. That work is a great and a noble work. It is teaching us how to come near to God, by the way of obedience, and by the path of patience. Must not these things, pain and death, have something very great and good to teach, since Jesus Christ came into the world in order that He might learn the lesson which they have to teach?

Of course that was not the main object of His coming into the world ; but it must have been part of His object. It was a hard lesson, even for Him to learn. It drew from Him the prayer that the bitter cup might pass away from Him. But God did not answer His prayer in that way. The cup was to be drained, even to the bitter dregs. Even the pure gold of His pure nature had to be tried in the fire ; had to have something of value, something of brightness and splendour, added to it.

May we not say then, that, although the angels are higher than we are, we have yet something which they have not ? We have, as Jesus Christ has, the experience of pain and suffering and death. These things, though they spring out of evil, and are the result of sin, give us something which we could not have had if they had never existed. An old Christian once cried, in an ecstasy, "O blessed sin, which has taught me the love of Jesus !" Without going to this length I think we may well cry out, "O blessed pain, blessed suffering, blessed death, which have taught me the love of Jesus, and helped me to become once more the son of God !"

Now, do not for a moment suppose that I consider what I have said to be a scientific explanation of the existence of evil. I do not think it is, nor do I think that any such explanation is possible. Men who spend their lives in striving to unloose the secrets of the physical world, and men who spend their lives in striving to unloose the secrets of the spiritual world, men of science, and theologians alike, must accustom themselves to come into daily contact with the awful and inexplicable fact of suffering. We must face that fact as it is, and we must be glad if we can here and there trace a little sign that would seem to indicate the work of a God, who is a God of love, in spite of all the present pain which stares us in the face.

It is the Christian only who can triumph in any degree over the despondency into which one must be cast who examines the misery he sees around him. And it is by no logical or scientific explanation that his mind can be set at rest. It is by the contemplation of the Christ who suffered pain, that he begins to understand that pain can ennoble him. It is by comprehending, it may be after long years

of waiting for the comprehension, that the Gospel raises him up, by no proud triumphant victories of effort or of faith; but by patient obedience and submission to suffering and pain; just as Jesus, tempted, used none of the supernatural powers at His command to establish a great, ambitious, earthly kingdom of Christ, because He knew that such a kingdom would not endure so long, or do the work as well as that silent despised kingdom, which should win, and has won its way in the world by spiritual means.

And if you are inclined to join in that common cry, that you do not see why suffering should make men perfect, and fitter to be called the sons of God, let me call a witness to the truth of what I say. You are yourself the witness whom I summon to bear evidence to the use of pain. I say, if you look into your own conscience, and if you are resolved to bear honest testimony, you must confess that pain and suffering do bring you nearer to God, do wean you away from things of this world, are, in themselves, a power to raise you into a better being than you were before. And death, the greatest pain, shall complete the work which

common earthly pains have commenced. If suffering just opens a little the golden gates of heaven, so that you, in the midst of your pain, can catch, now and then, a little glimpse of the kingdom of God, one or two gleams of bright light streaming through the almost closed doors; death shall reveal it all to you; death shall usher you into the immediate presence of Him who has loved you so much that he has called you His son.

SERMON XXIV.

THE DAYS OF JACOB'S LIFE
FEW AND EVIL.

*“And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou ?
And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of
my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few
and evil have the days of the years of my life been,
and have not attained unto the days of the years of
the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.”*

—GENESIS XLVII. 8, 9.

KING Solomon has left us this wise precept,
“In all thy ways acknowledge Him,” i.e., God,
and the promise accorded to it is, “and he shall
direct thy paths.” Israel, we now find, set out
on his journey towards Egypt ; he left Hebron,
where he had been dwelling, and came to
Beersheba, and here he acknowledged God, by
offering sacrifices unto Him. He no doubt chose

this place in remembrance of the communion which his father Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham, had with God here. As he thus acknowledged God, God did direct his paths ; He spake unto him in the visions of the night, and called him by his former name Jacob, Jacob, encouraging him to go down into Egypt, telling him to fear not, promising at the same time to make of him a great nation there—and that he should have God's presence with him ; “ I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will also surely bring thee up again.”

Though Jacob died in Egypt, yet this promise was fulfilled when his body was removed from Egypt and buried in the land of Canaan, about which on his death-bed he appeared most anxious,—and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes,—this is a promise that living and dying, his beloved Joseph should be a comfort to him, that Joseph should live as long as he did, and that he should be with him at his death, to close his eyes with love and tenderness. After this communion with God, Jacob rose up from Beersheba, and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father and their little ones and their wives in the waggons which Pharaoh had sent to

carry him. Jacob had the character of being a plain man, his son Joseph rode in a chariot, but a waggon served him; he and his sons took with them their cattle and other goods and came into Egypt. Jacob very prudently sent Judah before him to Joseph to give notice of his arrival in Goshen, and Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father; in this he showed due and proper respect to his aged father; he presented himself unto him; we see how much he loved his father; he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while, more even than he loved his brother Benjamin, on whose neck he wept when the brethren brought him down with them to buy corn. How delighted both father and son must have been at their meeting! Now let me die, exclaimed the patriarch, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. Not but that it was desirable for him to live with Joseph and see his honour and usefulness, but he was so overpowered that it seemed impossible for him to expect any additional happiness in this life. Joseph showed proper care and consideration in his brethren's settlement; it was but right that he should inform Pharaoh of what a colony had

come to settle in his dominions ; he wished them to live by themselves, separate as much as possible from the Egyptians who were idolators, in the land of Goshen which lay nearest to Canaan, that they might be mindful of the country from which they came out ; for Joseph, no doubt, knew that the time would come when they would seek opportunity to return ; it might be also, because Goshen was less thickly peopled and well-furnished with pastures for their cattle.

Shepherds, we find, were an abomination to the Egyptians. That is, they looked upon them with contempt, and Joseph would not send for his brethren to Egypt to be insulted and trampled upon ! He would return them good for evil ; he wished them also to continue their former occupation, and not to be ashamed of it, even before the king—for their calling was an honest one—and certainly one of the pleasantest that any man can be engaged in. Like every other calling, their are some trials and hardships connected with it, particularly in former times, and in the eastern countries, when it was necessary that the flocks should be watched and tended by night as well as by day. Had he wished it, Joseph no doubt could have found them employ-

ment in selling out the corn, or have procured them places about the court or in the army. Though Joseph was a great man, and his brethren comparatively poor and needy, he was not ashamed of them, he introduced five of them to Pharaoh, who said unto them, "What is your occupation?" He took it for granted that they had something to do, and were not idle, useless vagabonds. If they would not work they could have no right to eat of his bread in the time of scarcity. They replied, "Thy servants are shepherds, both we and also our father's ; they added, that to sojourn in the land they had come ; they did not come to settle there for ever, only to stay for a time, while the famine prevailed in Canaan. The king gave them a settlement in the land of Goshen, to shew his gratitude to Joseph, because he had been such a blessing to him and his kingdom, and offered them preferment over his cattle, provided they were men of activity. Then Joseph brought in Jacob, his father, and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. May we not imagine for ourselves this scene—the aged patriarch saluting, after the fashion of the east, the king, the benefactor of his beloved son, and then bless-

ing him in the name of the God of Abraham and Isaac. Pharaoh asked Jacob a common question, "How old art thou?" A question often put to old men, and Jacob's countenance probably showed him to be very a old man, for he had been a man of labour and sorrow; and as people did not live so long in Egypt as in Canaan, Pharaoh might look upon him with wonder. Jacob gave Pharaoh a remarkable reply,—"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage,"—which we would call a straightforward answer; he called his life a pilgrimage; looking upon himself as a stranger in the world, a traveller towards another. He not only reckoned himself a pilgrim, now that he was in Egypt, a strange country, which he had never been in before, but his life from beginning to end as a pilgrimage; he spoke of his life by days—first, that they had been few, though he had now lived a hundred and thirty years,—secondly, that they were evil,—thirdly, that they were short of the days of his fathers, not so many, not so pleasant as theirs

had been ; old age had come sooner upon him than it had done upon some of them, who had lived to a very great age.

How few, how short, are man's days, when compared with eternity ? The eternal God, the eternal state, in which one thousand years (longer than any man lived) are but as one day!—if the days of man are evil, it is well they are few. Jacob's life had indeed been made up of trouble. And have we not ourselves similar troubles ? Are there no dissensions in families now?—such as there were between Jacob and Esau ? Are there no Labans in the world, to deceive and take advantage of us in every possible way ? Have we never sorrow similar to Jacob's, when he exclaimed, in very bitterness of heart, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not ?" when we are bereaved of our children, or our friends and companions, "Though lost to sight, to memory dear." Jacob, you *may* depend upon it, was right when he said that "few and evil the days of the years of his life had been." And when we come ourselves to the end of our journey, and look back upon the past, we will make a similar confession,—that man is of few days and full of trouble.

SERMON XXV.

KING SOLOMON'S REFLECTIONS
ON THE FALL.

"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
—ECCLESIASTES VII. 29.

THIS declaration of the fall of man proceeds from one, who, in his own life, and by his own conduct, afforded a most sad proof of that estrangement from, and rebellion against God, which has been caused by man's first disobedience. King Solomon was peculiarly a favourite with God, endowed, in answer to his prayers, with an almost superhuman share of wisdom; he yet, towards the end of his reign over the children and kingdom of Israel, took to himself strange wives and concubines, thus giving way

to the most debasing weakness ; and at last forgetful of the many mercies of his God, became a worshipper of the false gods of those unworthy favourites by whom he was surrounded. But by the power of the grace of God, he was enabled before his death, to shake off these vile enchantments, and return to the better course of serving the one true God, which for a time he had abandoned ; and thus, he who had been made an evidence of man's evil nature became a witness and preacher unto righteousness ; for in the words of the text, the king would appear to be seeking for instances of wisdom, and of virtue amongst men, and that he was disappointed in the search. Now, if we ourselves, even at this enlightened time of day, look abroad into the world, will not the same sort of disappointment, in a religious point of view, occur to us ? May we not see multitudes and multitudes of human beings, with souls to save or to lose, utterly careless of their souls well-being ; and alike neglectful of the mercies and the threatenings of God—rushing from one stage of sensual indulgence to another ; breaking down every barrier which virtue and religion have set up ; and causing much anguish and sorrow to

themselves in this life, and if they repent not, much more terrible sorrow in the life to come? We need not to go any further than our own hearts; if we look within, we must admit, even on the most superficial examination, that from the moment when reason first influenced us to the present hour, there has always been a constant though unequal warfare between our duties and our passions, so that the good which we would do, we do not; but the evil which we would not, that we do. Thus, from our very infancy we progress onward from the trifling sins of childhood to the more criminal indulgences of youth; till, by almost imperceptible degrees, we at last arrive at that idolatrous devotion to the world; that insatiable longing after pleasure; that clinging to the things of this life, which makes us turn away even from the very thought of God; much less have any real love for his service. But does not even our reason, without the assistance of holy Scripture, teach us that an all-merciful and all-wise God could never have created us originally as we are now? That He who is infinite in love and goodness, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, could never have implanted in our minds the seeds of guilt and disobedience.

The bare thought, that He whose very name is holy, and from whom proceedeth every good, and every perfect gift, should have formed creatures, thus naturally vicious and unworthy of His love, is little less than blasphemy, and can only be the instigation of the evil one. No! God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions. What saith the Scripture? God made man in His own image. He created him upright, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. When he had perfected all the glorious, though minor wonders of creation, reduced all things to order, given light and life to the world; when He had thus prepared a place for him to dwell in, man, the wonderful completion of His creative power, the perfection of His wisdom, at length was introduced; not created like his other works by a mere word, "Let there be light, and there was light," but solemnly and deliberately determined upon by the eternal Godhead; not formed, as the noblest of the unintelligent creation were, after various arbitrary models, but in God's own image. Thus may we see that man was made upright, after the image of God in holiness and righteousness, with a mind capable

of appreciating and examining the wonders of creation, having love towards his Creator ; seeing in the harmony and grandeur of creation the excellence, the glory, and the goodness of the blessed God, obedient to His laws ; having no other thoughts of happiness than in following His precepts, and conforming to His will. Such was man ! the priest and ruler of this wonderful world—the only creature which could offer to his Creator the praise of a grateful spirit ! Such was man, when God first placed him in the garden of Eden, amidst all things good and pleasant to the eye, and the prospect before him of an endless enjoyment ! Is this the condition of Adam's posterity ? Has this primæval state of happiness and purity been handed down to us ? Alas ! what a sad—what an afflicting—what a humiliating answer, does the present state human nature give to this inquiry ! It tells us of the bloom and beauty of that paradise transformed into a dark and howling wilderness ;—it shews us death as the sad substitute for immortality ; not alone consigning to the silent tomb the feeble and exhausted limbs of age—but blighting in its bud the opening promise of the young ; it shows us sin as the

sad substitute for holiness, having an entire and desolating influence on the moral world, robbing it of every remaining impression of its lost goodness, and perverting to evil purposes those very energies which, if rightly directed, would form, as it were, the connecting link between earth and heaven. Such then has been the state of the moral world, since the unhappy fall of our first parents; though some traces in most men of better tendencies may be seen; yet we cannot hide from ourselves the humiliating truth, that we are now very far different from what our first parents were before they disobeyed. Now this is truly a subject for deep and serious thought. We may recall to our minds that holy and happy time, before sin and misery had come into the world—and look forward also to that still more happy time when sin and sorrow shall be no more. We must remember that though man in his creation was happy, yet this state was not unchangeable and was capable of being forfeited. Though God had directed man's thoughts and affections towards good, yet he had not made him like a mere machine, or fixed him in such a state that it was impossible for him to change. This

would have removed all free will, and rendered man incapable of voluntary obedience. We have seen what God made man. Let us now see, very briefly, what, through the temptation of the Evil One, he has made himself. The wise king tells us, he hath sought out many inventions. God gave man a law which involved perfect and complete obedience—life and happiness, the promise; death temporal, death eternal, the penalty. There was to be one test of man's obedience—one tree in the garden of which he was forbidden to eat. We are very apt to think the terms very easy, and had we ourselves been in the position of our first parents we would have resisted. Let us not be too sure of this! We all find it no easy matter to resist temptation! and there can be no doubt the approach to Eve, and through her to Adam, was very subtle and most treacherous. Well may we exclaim, "An enemy hath done this."

Man, we see and know, was himself the one sole-procuring cause of his own fall from innocence. God made him upright, and capable of rendering obedience to His will. He placed the reward and the penalty before him. In a similar way they are placed before us, in the narrow

and the broad road. In an evil hour, the enemy of God and man was first parleyed with; he insinuated the doubt into Eve's mind as to whether God would do as He had said or not; then he prevailed. The law of the creation was broken, peace and innocence fled, and the earthly paradise was lost to those who transgressed; and not only to them, but to their children's children, to the present hour; and this state of banishment will continue till the return of the second Adam, to restore all things.

SERMON XXVI.

THE TEMPTATION.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."—MATTHEW IV. 1.

THE humanity of Christ is a link in the chain which binds man to God. There is no occasion during the whole of the life of Jesus on earth, in which His humanity comes forward more prominently than in the temptation. Shall we be doing Him honour, or dishonour, in looking upon the temptation as real? Surely, honour; for it can have been no good thing that he should be tempted for nothing; it can have done no good to record the history of the event, unless there was a reality about it which we are, some of us, perhaps, a little afraid of facing. I do not want to impress upon you that Jesus really did feel the temptation as a real temptation, just as you or I might have done.

And why should He have to go through this experience? In order that He might know what we go through when Satan dresses up his wiles for us. Jesus had to learn what we endure as tempted men; otherwise, how could He sympathize with us? Pain of every kind, sorrow and death, He went through. How could temptation be left out of the gloomy list?

The first temptation suggested by Satan was that Jesus, being hungry after a long fast, should command the stones to become bread. It would have been an easy task for Him, by whom "all things were made," to perform so small a miracle as that would have been. In more than one way it would have been an advantage to do what Satan suggested; for instance, it would soon have been spread abroad that the miracle had been performed, and would certainly have resulted in attracting attention to His high claims, and in thus making converts. Moreover, it would have been an economy of time and suffering. Why should Jesus go on enduring that gnawing, aching, human pain of hunger, which had lasted unrelieved, save, perhaps by the berries of the field, and the water of the brook, for forty days and forty nights,

when a simple word from Him would change the stones at His feet into bread?

But there was a subtler sting than even this in Satan's temptation. Jesus had, as yet, wrought no miracle. How far He was conscious, from the beginning, of His divine power and divine nature, we are not told, and therefore do not know. To our mind, the words of Satan seem to suggest the idea to Jesus that He was perhaps not quite all that Satan knew Him to be, and that for His own satisfaction, for His own support, He should perform this otherwise comparatively useless miracle. Jesus grew in wisdom and statute; Satan might hope that He had not yet reached the full wisdom of His father, and that He would fall into the temptation which was laid for Him. But Satan was wrong, because he had no measure of the power which was in even the human nature of Christ. He was answered at once, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." This was an answer made for us. He might have said, "I am thy Lord, and stronger than thou." He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." Jesus was not only the conqueror of Satan's temptation, but

He was the conqueror for us, because He used the same means of resistance which we have ready to our hand. He overcame as man.

The practical lesson which we may learn from this is very plain. However subtle the temptation may be, we must meet it in the same simple way that Jesus adopted; we must try it by the same simple test. Is the suggested course of conduct in accordance with God's word? Just as it was a temptation of Satan that Jesus should use the Divine power for a personal end, so the same evil spirit often tempts us to misapply the powers which we have at our command. Nor does the apparent innocence of the suggested course, or sometimes even its justifiableness, really make the wrong right.

The next phase of the temptation shews Jesus placed, by Satan, on a pinnacle of the temple, and tempted to throw Himself down; because, says the tempter, quoting Scripture with a tempter's true skill, "It is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." How would this temptation commend itself to

Christ? The pinnacle of the temple must have been a very conspicuous object. What an overwhelming evidence of the truth of Jesus' claims would have been the spectacle of Jesus, supported in mid-air, by a troop of ministering angels; and this, too, in view of all Jerusalem! Could He not have converted the whole city to the new faith in an hour after such an exhibition of Divine power? Was not, then, the course suggested by Satan the best possible one which could be devised, to bring about the ends which he was sent into the world to accomplish? But Jesus knew that the way in which he was to convince their hearts was not to work on them by a sudden and dramatic appeal to the minds of men. His miracles were to be of the kind which would shew men the love of God. He was to "go about doing good," healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf. It would have been even in Him, a presumptuous thing thus to exhibit His association with God. The miracles which He afterwards wrought had for their object, indeed, to prove this association; but they went further, and proved much more—that God loved man, and that the misery and pain

which exists in the world is not from God, although He allows it for a time. If Jesus had yielded to this temptation of Satan, He would have lost the opportunity of shewing the great truth of which I speak.

His life for the future would have been one of constant excitement and occupation. There would have been no place in it for the calm conversation by the lake, for the gentle association with the chosen followers, for the gradual unfolding of the will of God, for such teachings as the Sermon on the Mount. The answer of Jesus, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," has a twofold application. First, it was a direct rebuke to Satan; he was to remember that he was in the presence of his Master. Next, for Jesus to have done what Satan wanted him to do would have been a presumptuous tempting of God.

And in this temptation, too, there is an obvious lesson for us all, a lesson, I think, in the first place, for really religious people. Is it not true, brethren, that when we have, perhaps, learned something of the meaning of the cross; when we have made some progress in the Christian life, we want to take the conversion

of the world into our own hands, and do the work in our own way; we want brilliant sermons, grand services, prodigies of missionary zeal and effort and success; and in our own inner life we are not contented with slow progress; we want to triumph over the power of evil without delay.

How easy it is to confound Satan's suggestion with God's way of working! What may seem to be the shortest and best way of attaining our object, may, in reality, be only a presumptuous tempting of Him. We may not, indeed, ever be idle, as some who hear or read my words may think I am suggesting that we should be. We must always be full of zeal for God and God's work, both in ourselves and in others; only we must follow the example of Jesus, and learn to go on daily adding to the work we have got to do, patiently in God's way, not ours.

The third temptation of Jesus, is that one in which He is taken up by the devil into an exceeding high mountain, and is shewn all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—"All these things," says Satan, "I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Now would not power, earthly power, have helped Jesus greatly in His work? Suppose Him seated on a throne of the greatest possible earthly dignity; would not that have been a great help towards setting up that higher kingdom which He was come into the world expressly to establish? Just see what a real temptation this one must have been for Jesus. He could not walk a step in the streets of Jerusalem without seeing the religion of the Jews insulted by the presence and the power of the pagan Roman. The cynical unbelieving spirit of Rome was perhaps the greatest hindrance to the establishment of the kingdom of God. Would it not be a wonderful help to set the foundation of that kingdom in an earthly, universal empire?

There was only one condition which Satan set to his offer. Jesus must fall down and worship him; that is, Jesus must establish His earthly kingdom by earthly means, by subservience to the spirit of this world, who is Satan. And Jesus saw at once that such a kingdom would not be the kingdom of God. He might gain much in the way of influence over men's minds, if He were their earthly

ruler ; He might enlist countless millions under the banner which He would set up, but his followers would be no more than the followers of an earthly king. The sort of kingdom which Satan suggested to Jesus to establish, was such a one as Peter and the other apostles for a long time expected. But He knew that His kingdom must not be of this world ; He knew that His task was to influence the hearts of men ; He knew that His teaching of love would win a vaster kingdom than any which ambition or earthly power could ever establish.

The two ideas which were present to the mind of Jesus, were clearly marked out : establishment of His kingdom was to be attained either by earthly means, or by that longer and more laborious process which He actually adopted. There was a real temptation ; but Jesus did not hesitate. "Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The world was to be conquered by gentleness and love, not by arms, not by force, not by empire. The spirit of this world is violence, compulsion ; the spirit of Christ's kingdom is opposed to that ; it is the spirit of truth, of gentleness, of

suffering. And who can doubt that the victory of love is not a more glorious victory than that on which an empire is founded? Look at the bright side of Historical Christianity, and note the many glorious deeds which are recorded there. Are they not infinitely nobler than the greatest victories of the world?

In conclusion, let me point out to you, brethren, how clearly the last temptation of Jesus shews you how to overcome the same temptation when it is presented to you. Putting the matter broadly, you have to choose between living in an earthly kingdom, and living in a heavenly one. You may think, sometimes, that there are strong arguments in favour of the former; that you would be helped forward yourself in your inner life, or helping forward others in their life, by using earthly means. But it is not so; you must struggle to recognize the hand of God; you must pray to be set free from the spirit of this world. And in your strivings and prayers, after a period of probation, angels will come and minister to you, as they did to Jesus, and you shall see the light.

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